
**A
RESPONSE
TO
RECENT
ACCUSATIONS**

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PREFACE

Since the material in this document concerns an event that took place in the church in Anaheim and since we, the authors, do not live in Anaheim, we believe that it is appropriate for us to state our grounds for writing this material. First, we are members of the organic Body of Christ, and what took place in Anaheim was not only a local matter but also a Body matter. For this reason, it is a matter that concerns us and affects us. Second, the speaking of John Ingalls was transcribed, printed, and distributed. His word has spread beyond his locality, and this word has been brought to our attention. Third, since John's speaking is actually an attack on Brother Lee and his ministry and on all the churches and saints who continue to receive this ministry, we felt responsible to respond to this attack for the sake of our brother, the churches, and the saints. Fourth, because John's speaking is subtle and deceptive, some of the saints may appreciate help in discerning the nature and character of this speaking. Finally, John's speaking presents a distorted picture of the Lord's recovery and of the Lord's up-to-date move in His recovery. It is necessary that this distortion be exposed and refuted and that a word of truth be given. In view of the foregoing, we have prepared this analysis of and response to John Ingalls's speaking.

We are open for fellowship on the matters covered in this document. The saints are free to respond and to make inquiries as they wish. However, we must point out that we can consider and reply to written responses only if two conditions are met: these responses must be presented in a proper spirit of fellowship, and they must be signed by individuals. All inquiries fulfilling these conditions will be graciously received. Our mailing address is P.O. Box 166816, Irving, Texas 75016-6816. Additional copies of this book can be requested from this address as well.

RK & KSR

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

On March 19, 1989, John Ingalls and Al Knoch notified the church in Anaheim of their decision to withdraw from the eldership. In so doing, John gave a word of explanation which was transcribed, edited, and printed for circulation. Because this material has been distributed in an attempt to influence others and because it presents a distorted picture of the Lord's recovery, we have prepared this detailed response.

In our response, we will examine Brother John's opening remarks, his eighteen numbered points, and his closing words. As we review all these matters, we will endeavor to present an understanding of the situation in the Lord's recovery which is in keeping with the truth of the Scriptures and sound spiritual perception.

At the outset, we wish to make three matters clear. First, we do not take issue with the fact that the two brothers withdrew from the eldership. Their action was according to their personal feeling, and we respect this.

Second, in this response our concern is to analyze the speaking of John and what this speaking indicates, implies, and suggests. We ask the reader to understand that although we will subject the words spoken by John to careful scrutiny, we have no intention of judging his person.

The third matter concerns the nature of John's words. His speaking on March 19, 1989, was not an instance of speaking for the Lord or of teaching the truth of the Word or of giving a testimony of his experience of Christ. On the contrary, his speaking was an expression of his personal opinions, feelings, and views, to which, of course, he has a right. Anyone who reads the transcript would do well to keep in mind that even though these opinions, feelings, and views may be clothed with spiritual and biblical terminology, they nevertheless remain the personal opinions, feelings, and views of the speaker.

The nature of John's speaking has two other features: accusation and pervertedness. In essence, all his points are a long list of accusations directed at the churches, at the saints in the churches, and at the person and ministry of Brother Lee. These accusations contain much that is perverted. Our use of perverted follows that of Paul in Acts 20:30. "From among you yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after themselves." The Greek word for perverted means distorted or twisted, and that is the way we are applying the word here. The transcript is filled with a speaking that is not only a matter of personal opinion, feeling, and view but also that is accusatory and even distorted, twisted, perverted. This is the basic nature of the speaking which we will deal with in this response.

The transcript makes it very clear that in withdrawing from the eldership John and Al acted in concert, with John being the chief spokesman. This is indicated by John's use of

“we” in the opening paragraph: “we became very clear,” “we need to withdraw,” “we want to make that known,” “we would like to give a little word of explanation” (italics added). It is evident that John and Al had much private fellowship apart from the other elders and then took action as a unit. This is a sign that these brothers have formed a party.

John’s Opening Remarks

The basis of John’s speaking here is not the Word of God, the leading of the Spirit, or the sense of the Body. The basis of his remarks on this occasion is his own personal, subjective feelings and opinions. This is indicated by the words “I began to realize” in the third paragraph and “I also began to realize” in the fourth. All that John goes on to say is related to his individual realization. Even though the accusations he makes are serious, John’s words betray a certain confidence in his subjective impressions. This may account for the fact that in presenting his points he adopts a pontificating tone, proclaiming his views and opinions as if they were self-evident truths, as if they were true simply because he has spoken them, as if he were the voice of the Lord’s recovery. This presumption in conveying personal views as if they were an expression of the Lord’s assessment or of the sense of the Body is very disturbing. As a human being and as a brother, John has the liberty to cultivate any number of opinions, views, feelings, and impressions. However, contrary to what his speaking indicates, he should not presume that his personal realizations entitle him to be a spokesman for the recovery or for the church in Anaheim or for the elders of the church or for the saints. Nevertheless, a careful study of his words indicates that, in fact, Brother John assumes the position of speaking for more than just himself. This is demonstrated by his frequent use of the word *our*. Instead of speaking only for himself, he has tried to influence others to embrace his views. The very fact that his words are in print and are being circulated indicates that there is the intention on the part of some to propagate John’s individual views. Those who are inclined to believe John’s word and follow him would do well to consider seriously what the basis of his speaking is and whether this basis is trustworthy.

The Accusation That Our Practice Does Not at All Match Our Teaching

The unreliability of John’s subjective and personal assessment of the Lord’s recovery is indicated by the following remark: “Our practice has not at all matched our teaching.” Please notice the *our* here. It clearly indicates that John is presuming to speak on behalf of the whole recovery, including all the churches with all the saints. The word *practice* denotes the totality of the practices in the local churches; it refers to the whole of the practice in the Lord’s recovery. Then we have the extremely crucial words *not at all*. These words mean exactly what they say; they are a part of an absolute, universal, and

exclusive statement, a statement that applies everywhere and at all times and that allows for no exceptions.

Let us read the whole sentence again: “Our practice has not at all matched our teaching.” John is here saying that not one of our practices has, even in the least way, matched our teaching. This is the undeniable import of his use, both in speaking and in the edited transcript, of *not at all*. Have we taught concerning the ground of the church? Yes, but John says that our practice has matched our teaching *not at all*. Have we taught concerning the oneness of the Body, the receiving of the believers, and the love of the brothers? Yes, but John’s feeling is that our practice has matched these teachings *not at all*. Have we taught concerning keeping our first love for the Lord and contacting Him in the Word? Indeed we have, but according to John, we have practiced this *not at all*. Have we taught concerning the exercise of the spirit, the need to be saturated with the Word, the importance of living a godly life, the enjoyment of Christ, the organic union with the Triune God, the growth in life, transformation, the building up of the church, the increase of Christ through the preaching of the gospel, serving the Lord, the coming kingdom with the matters of dispensational reward and punishment, and the New Jerusalem? Again the answer is “yes,” but according to John’s statement *not at all*, not even in the least significant way, has our practice of any of these matters matched our teaching. According to what John has come to realize, there is not a single practice in the Lord’s recovery that has at all matched our teaching. Remember, John’s opinion is this: “Our practice has not at all matched our teaching.”

Is it not evident that John’s statement is far from accurate? Instead of saying that our practice has *not at all matched our teaching*, John could have said something more moderate and temperate. He could have said, “Our practice is deficient,” or “Certain of our practices have not wholly been in keeping with some of our teachings,” or “I feel that in various ways our practices have not lived up to our vision.” However, John chose to make, based on his personal opinions, views, feelings, and impressions, a universal proclamation regarding the whole of the practice in the Lord’s recovery.

Simply put, John is wrong. He makes a universal statement, and he is wrong in what he says. Therefore, we reject John’s characterization of the practice in the Lord’s recovery. Further, we reject his assuming the role of spokesman to give voice to what “our practice” is.

The Accusation That the Lord’s Recovery Has Changed in Its Nature

With his personal feelings as the basis, John says not only that none of our practices matches our teaching; he even goes so far as to say that the nature of the Lord’s recovery has changed. “I also began to realize,” John tells us, “that the nature of what we call the Lord’s recovery has changed.” Here John simply makes the accusation; he does not

support it. His eighteen numbered points, however, may be viewed as an attempt to substantiate this accusation. Before we go on to deal with these points and thereby deal with John's false accusation, we will briefly comment on six matters related to this accusation.

First, John's claim that the Lord's recovery has changed in nature is based on his personal opinions, views, feelings, and impressions, for it is something that he "began to realize." The source of this realization is questionable; there is no reason to believe that it is based on the Scriptures, the Spirit, the sense of the Body, or thorough, unbiased study. This should warn us to be careful concerning John's claims.

Second, the charge that the Lord's recovery has changed in nature is an accusation of the most extreme seriousness. The nature of a thing is constant, for it is related to the constitution of that thing. For example, a male child has a particular nature. As the child grows into manhood, he undergoes many developmental changes; however, his nature as a male human being does not change. To say that his nature has changed is actually to say that he is no longer a male human being but something else. The principle is the same with respect to John's view regarding the alleged change in the nature of the Lord's recovery. John is actually saying that, in reality, what we have known as the Lord's recovery has undergone a change in nature and has thereby become something else. In John's opinion, it has become a denomination (see chapter 8) and a "camp" (see chapter 14). This is what John is saying, and those who read the transcript need to understand this. John is saying that those churches and saints who still receive Brother Lee's ministry and those co-workers who continue to respect Brother Lee's leading in the work have become a camp, a religious entity that, having changed its nature from what it once was, is no longer the Lord's real recovery.

Third, since John claims that the nature of the Lord's recovery has changed, he obviously must know what the nature of the recovery is. We, therefore, call upon him to explain what this nature is. There may be a great difference between what the nature of the Lord's recovery is and what John perceives it to be.

Fourth, John speaks not of the Lord's recovery but of "what we call the Lord's recovery." This is subtle. It may be that John is saying that the Lord's recovery and "what we call the Lord's recovery" are two different things. John may also be saying that those who are in the latter are no longer in the former. In other words, John may be saying that since, in his opinion, the Lord's recovery has changed in nature, it has become something that is called the Lord's recovery but no longer is the Lord's recovery in reality. Furthermore, John may be implying, as has been done by others in the past, that he and his party are in the reality of the Lord's recovery and that the majority of us—that is, hundreds of churches and thousands of saints throughout the world—have degraded into something which can only be called the Lord's recovery.

Fifth, we disagree utterly with John's accusation that the nature of the Lord's recovery has changed, and we also repudiate his suggestion that we are now merely in "what we call the Lord's recovery." No, the Lord's recovery and what we call the Lord's recovery are one and the same. Regardless of the developments that have been taking place as we go on gradually and positively to discard the old, traditional way of religion and to practice the way ordained by God in the Scriptures, the Lord's recovery has not changed in its nature. It may be that John does not discern between certain features of the traditional way of meeting and serving and the nature of the Lord's recovery. If John is short of this discernment, he may think that dropping the old, traditional way is tantamount to changing the nature of the Lord's recovery. Actually, to drop the old way and to practice the God-ordained way is to be true to the nature of the recovery. Many of us can testify that by taking the scriptural way we are more in the Lord's recovery than ever before.

Sixth, we must say frankly and directly, yet in love, that John is the one who has changed. The nature of the Lord's recovery has not changed—John has changed. The John Ingalls who spoke his opinions on March 19, 1989, is not the John Ingalls we have known for many years. It may be that John is projecting the change which has taken place in him onto Brother Lee and all the churches and saints who are still receiving his ministry. This means that John may wrongly interpret the change within himself as a change in the recovery. It is a serious mistake for John to assume that he has remained faithful and constant and that the recovery has changed and become deviant.

Although the Lord's recovery has not changed in its nature, the Lord has gone on in His recovery. Because of the change that has taken place within himself, John may view this advance of the Lord as a departure. This is surely regrettable. If John persists in his view, having neither a change of mind nor of attitude, he may take himself out of the divine stream, the flowing of the Triune God, which he once so dearly cherished.

Abnormal Spiritual Perception

Before we turn to John's eighteen numbered points, we need to draw the reader's attention to a striking feature of John's speaking on March 19, 1989—abnormal spiritual perception. As indicated by the material in the transcript, John's perception of the situation in the Lord's recovery is abnormal, and his view is biased and distorted. Again and again, his words demonstrate the failure to perceive the true character of the things about which he is speaking. "He does not see the true character of a thing; yet he considers himself clear" (Watchman Nee, *Spiritual Reality or Obsession*, p. 48). John claims certain things to be facts that are not facts. We believe that a careful examination of the content and implications of John's eighteen points will show that his spiritual perception of the condition and direction of the Lord's recovery is abnormal and unreliable and that the conclusions he draws from this perception are erroneous and unwarranted.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ACCUSATION CONCERNING THE BUILDING UP OF THE MINISTRY

The charge is made that “there has been a change of emphasis to the building up of the work or the ministry more than the local churches.” As with all his charges, John does not cite evidence to support this claim, but rather relies on a hope that his recipients will believe this based on the fact that it is he who is speaking it. The charge is based on his interpretation of what he sees happening in the Lord’s recovery today. The fact that it is based on his interpretation should be stressed at the outset, and his interpretation should be scrutinized carefully.

There can be no doubt that the ministry is more active than it has ever been. For years, we in the Lord’s recovery perceived the ministry as having primarily a teaching function. Virtually all ministry, not just that of Brother Lee, but of other ministers as well, John Ingalls included, took the form of messages given to public audiences. It was for the most part a ministry of speaking on spiritual topics alone. The ministry taught much to the saints in this way but entrusted the responsibility for the outworking of the vision to the saints. In recent years, that is, since the end of 1984, Brother Lee and those co-workers who have chosen to follow his lead have become active also in the outworking of what is being spoken in the ministry.

The troubling stagnation among the churches has been the motivation for this turn in the ministry to an active outworking of the vision. While this stagnation was not so obvious in this country, the churches in the Far East, where the Lord’s recovery had been planted for nearly 40 years, gave acute evidence of it. Very simply, the majority of the saints gained in the early years in Taiwan had become inactive in the church life there. Rather than an increase in the churches, there was a decrease; and where there should have been an abundance of matured and functioning members, there was only a majority of dormant saints. The gospel ceased to spread to any significant degree, and only embers of an earlier blaze smoldered. In a country that was politically free, the Lord’s recovery had managed to influence society only to an extent that 2% of the population was Christian. In contrast, in mainland China, where atheism is the dictated belief and where there is no freedom for the gospel, 5% of the population had been evangelized. All the while, message after message on the highest and deepest truths was being released by the ministers of God’s Word. Where was the outworking of the rich truth? Or is the truth merely an academic matter? These facts speak to our shame.

But such a stagnation is not a characteristic of the proper church. The New Testament shows us that the Lord added daily to the church, that the early church multiplied quickly, and that it spread as no mere human movement had or could. History beyond the New

Testament testifies that the church encompassed the earth, overturned human culture, and demarcated time into two clear periods, before Christ and the years of our Lord. The proper church does not stagnate; it is divine and powerful. As it turned an age at its birth, it must turn an age at its maturity.

The gap between what we see as a norm for the proper church in the New Testament and what the situation was in the Lord's recovery in 1984 was too great to allow complacency. The stagnation that was evident in Taiwan had not fully developed in this country, but could we have hoped for anything better? In view of these facts, Brother Lee took up the responsibility for the outworking of the vision, not merely for the impartation of it. The ministry became very active and very specific in its endeavors to insure that every man would be presented full-grown in Christ.

The question then arises, Is this turn to an outworking of the vision proper? The answer to this question must necessarily be based on an interpretation of what is proper for the ministry. In John Ingalls's mind, the turn is not proper and has indeed become an attempt to build up the ministry rather than the local churches. But before it can be charged that this active role is self-seeking and self-building, the results of the ministry's endeavors should be examined and evaluated; the actual recipients of the benefits of the ministry's labors—the ministry itself or the local churches—must be identified. John did not bother to lay the results of the ministry's work of the last five years before his audience so that an accurate determination of the real beneficiaries could be made. He simply equated an active role with self-seeking and self-edification. We feel compelled to lay the results before our audience and to identify who—the ministry or the churches—has really been built up, who has profited.

One of the ministry's first actions was a call for full-timers in Taiwan, and to this call hundreds responded. What was the proper thing for the ministry to do at that time? These were all college graduates who had either given up their jobs or postponed their careers to serve the Lord. Should they have been thrust into the work without being given help on full-time service? If that had been done, many would have been lost due to inexperience, and surely many brothers would have accused the ministry of drawing these ones out only to fail. The ministry took the sacrifice of these young ones seriously and responded in a responsible fashion; it offered the practical way for these new full-timers to gain the needed training.

Against the initial fellowship of Brother Lee, the churches in the U.S. pushed for inclusion in the training in Taipei; and because exclusion would have been against the principle of the ministry being for all the churches, Brother Lee allowed trainees from around the world to join. This fact should be clearly enunciated, for there is much talk today that the ministry is not for the churches. Those who make this accusation like to cite the lines from Brother Lee's hymn, "Ministry is for the churches; Not the Church for ministry" (Hymns 914), as a standard from which they feel Brother Lee has departed. But

it was this standard that compelled Brother Lee to include all the saints who wished to join the training; if the ministry had not been for the churches, Brother Lee would not have agreed to accept trainees from outside of Taiwan.

With hundreds of young people from all over the earth—in most cases, the very best of their churches—gathered around the ministry and under its training, many hasty conclusions were drawn by ones at a distance or by ones who ventured to the training long enough to confirm pre-conceived, negative notions. The ministry, they said, has drawn all these brothers and sisters to itself to build up the work. The ministry, they said, has robbed the churches of its best young people to build itself up. The ministry, they concluded, is more for the building up of the work than for the building up of the local churches. But these charges were made based only on the gathering of the saints around the ministry for training; no consideration was given to what the outcome of that training would be. Those who made these charges pre-judged that the ministry would employ these full-timers for its own ends. They never bothered to wait and see what the ministry would actually do with the trained full-timers.

The way of training these new full-timers was experimental at first, and with it many took exception as well. It was unfortunate and, in our view, improper for them to so hastily condemn the efforts of the ministry. Nothing like this had ever been attempted among us, and yet these critics had no tolerance for experimentation and would allow no opportunity to the ministry for discovery. In their view, the efforts of the ministry had to be perfect even in its newest endeavors or it should be abandoned. Implicitly, they denied that the treasure is in earthen vessels.

Therefore a hasty conclusion drawn from the mere gathering of the full-timers around the ministry and an equally hasty condemnation of and unreasonable intolerance for a time of experimentation and discovery bred the germs for the present turmoil concerning the ministry. The chief proponents of dissension today will look no further than the facts that motivated their hasty position. They will not look at what is now developing in the Lord's recovery as a result of the training, and it seems that they wish to keep these results hidden from the eyes of those whom they wish to draw away to themselves.

But in time the ministry produced an army of full-timers that had the adequate training to be profitable. The profit is beginning to appear. We should ask then, Who is benefiting from the profit? We contend that it is the local churches that are profiting. Where these trainees serve, the profit is going to the churches. Churches are being raised up by these full-timers, not ministry stations. Hundreds are being saved, baptized, and shepherded into the church life in new cities. And the full-timers are leading these new saints into their function as members of the Body and of their own churches. And their hope is to move on to other localities where the Lord's recovery has not yet been planted. Can any accusation of impropriety be made from this? Is this not the proper work of the ministry—preaching the gospel, establishing churches, and perfecting the newly saved ones to

bear the burden for the church in their locality? How does the ministry profit from this; how can this be twisted to be understood as the ministry building itself up? Indeed the ministry is active and now emphasizes the outworking of the vision it has put before us. But the charge that the ministry is building itself up is against the facts.

What would the critics have wanted instead? From their denunciations of anything from Brother Lee's ministry after the Life-study of Acts, we must assume that they prefer the former role of the ministry, i.e., the giving of messages in an abundance of conferences and seminar-type trainings. Most of the more vocal critics, including John Ingalls, functioned extensively in this way, even to the extent of traversing the earth to give such conferences. But the perpetuation of this type of ministry is the true self-seeking and self-building ministry that they accuse Brother Lee's ministry of being. This kind of ministry does not allow the saints to function, but rather lulls them into a sleepy state of dysfunction. There is no training to function and no opportunity to function for the saints; rather, only the gifted ones function and are built up. It is certainly not an obvious self-seeking, but it is nevertheless a self-seeking indeed.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ACCUSATION CONCERNING UNITING THE CHURCHES AROUND A LEADER AND AN ORGANIZATION

This charge actually encompasses three smaller charges. The strongest of the three is, of course, that which concerns “a certain leader and organization,” but we wish to also deal with the charges concerning “a great effort and promotion” and the uniting of the saints and the churches. In each of the three charges, Brother John uses language that rings offensive in the ears of the saints, and by this he hopes to lend strength to his claims. The saints in the Lord’s recovery are aware of the dangers of leaders and organization, promotion, and “unity” (versus oneness); thus, these words send an alarm at their mere utterance. The question is, Is there a real fire? We wish to counter that on this charge John has simply sounded an alarm, even though there is no fire. We all know the illegality of such an action and the confusion that can result in the community because of it. We hope that all the saints would come to realize that the alarm is false.

No doubt, John refers to Brother Lee when he speaks of a certain leader, but for some reason he has no boldness to say so clearly. The charge he makes then is that there is a great promotion to unite the saints and the churches around Brother Lee and some organization he controls. We suppose that he is referring to the frequent declarations heard in the churches in support of Brother Lee’s ministry and to the frequent recommendations of his ministry made by the saints. But are these declarations and recommendations in and of themselves an evil? Is it wrong in and of itself to declare support for the ministry and further to recommend the ministry to others? Apparently John and those who have been drawn after him feel that it is. We, however, feel that there would be a problem only if the ministry being supported and recommended was deviant from God’s economy as revealed in the Bible. But these brothers have testified that they have no problem with the truth being expressed in the ministry. The strange thing is that only now do these brothers take offense at such a supporting and recommendation of the ministry. We remember countless occasions when these brothers, and specifically John Ingalls himself, declared their support and heartily recommended the ministry throughout the churches and to all the saints. But now they cry “Fire!” Was the Lord’s recovery consumed by this fire in the years preceding their sounding of the alarm? No, it was not, because there was no fire then, as there is no fire now. The real menace is not the support and recommendation of the ministry; the real menace is the sounding of a false alarm.

John Ingalls quotes from *Beliefs and Practices of the Local Church* to support his assertions, reading:

Our unique leader is Christ. We have no official, permanent, organized human leadership. Furthermore, there is no hierarchy of any kind and no world-wide leader. We regard no person as infallible, and we do not follow anyone blindly. On the contrary, we follow those whose teaching and practice is in accordance with the truth of God's Word. (p. 16)

John laments, "I'm sorry to say, that has not been our practice," but he gives no evidence to support his claim. He believes that in the minds of the saints the facts so self-evidently support his claim that he need not enunciate them. We are sorry that he has so greatly misjudged what is in the minds of the majority of the saints, for not all bring to his words the interpretation of the facts he holds. In fact, to many saints the last sentence quoted above not only characterizes precisely our relationship to Brother Lee, but also condemns John and raises doubts about his clarity of thought in using this passage. We have no reservations about following "those whose teaching and practice is in accordance with the truth of God's Word"; and in our minds, the teaching and practice of Brother Lee's ministry is in accordance with that high standard. If John and others who are of his persuasion feel that there is "a certain leader" in this, they are entitled to that categorization. We, however, sing the same tune that we have always sung, to the opposers without and now to the adversaries within: We will unashamedly follow those who lead us deeper into the essence and reality of God's Word. This we do in accordance with God's Word itself: "Be imitators of me, as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

"Organization" is also sounded out as an alarm to the saints. But again we ask, Where is the fire? It is instructive to consider the difference between an organization and its hoped for antithesis, an organism. By such consideration we will best be able to determine whether there is indeed the establishment of an organization in the Lord's recovery. The primary distinction between an organization and an organism lies in the source and type of activity. An organization relies on the external imposition of human effort to arrange the members of a class or group. The "ize" in organize, the verb root of the noun, implies an agent who performs the arrangement. Organization is pleasing to men because it results in a system of order and glorifies the agent who imposes order. An organism, on the other hand, relies on an internal life essence to produce a fruit that corresponds to the life within. An organism is also pleasing to men but glorifies no man because there is no external agent who operates; it is the life within that is glorified. God has chosen the way of an organism to glorify Himself: "In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit" (John 15:8). And it is He as the life in the divine organism of the Body of Christ who flows and increases unto the fruit that glorifies Him. The glory of the Body of Christ is not in man's labors, but in the organic development of the God of life within it. From this point of view, organization in the church is a problem because of whom it glorifies—the man who organizes, not the God who flows within.

A further distinction between an organization and an organism can be seen in the relationships between the members of each. An organization is an arrangement of the

members that can best be described as a hierarchy, a system in which the members of the group are placed in relative rank of importance and function. Unfortunately, a hierarchy becomes a self-serving entity, in that frequently importance and function are not determined by a member's actual condition and ability, but rather by the member's position in the hierarchy. An organism, on the other hand, is an organic arrangement in which there is no relative ranking by importance and function. All the members of an organism enjoy an equal status and have equally necessary functions. There can be no facade of position in an organism because the function of all the members assures that all the members have equal worth.

We must then ask the question, Can we see in the Lord's recovery today a situation that corresponds to organization? Are there agents arranging the saints and the churches so as to impose an order on them? And do we find an arrangement that ranks the members into a system of relative importance and function? We do not believe so. Neither Brother Lee nor the brothers who speak the same thing that he speaks attempt to impose a certain order on the churches or the saints. No attempt has ever been made to arrange the churches in some fashion, nor to bring the saints into a system of rank of importance and function. Many brothers have gone forth to speak the things being spoken by Brother Lee, to persuade, we are not ashamed to say, the churches of the excelling things being revealed in these days. When they have gone out, there has been no compulsion and no imposition. On the side of the receiving churches, in fact, there has always been a warm reception. But in some cases, the saints have been convinced that the visits by these brothers were no more than Brother Lee's subtle form of control. Just as the early recipients of the gospel received the word of the apostles with joy and later came under the perverting of some who came behind to reinterpret what had happened to them (Acts 14:2, 19; 15:1; 17:5, 13), so also today the saints in many places have heard the initial good news of what the Lord is doing in His recovery and have been subjected and even subjugated to the perverting of some who have come behind to reinterpret their joy.

Neither has there been an attempt to arrange the saints into a system of rank of importance and function. On the contrary, Brother Lee and those who speak the same things as he does are struggling to bring all the saints into their function as gifts. They would have all the saints become apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. There is the genuine concern and desire to find the proper way to perfect all the saints unto the work of ministry as revealed in Ephesians 4. This is contrary to the establishment of the hierarchy seen in organization. If Brother Lee is attempting to unite the saints around himself and an organization under his control, the perfecting of the saints that he struggles for is a self-defeating endeavor. Once the saints are perfected, his crucial role as a perfecting gift as well as that of others with similar gift and maturity becomes unnecessary. There can be no possibility of organization in what we see him doing today.

What we do see, however, among those speaking against what is happening today in the Lord's recovery is an implicit attempt at a primitive form of organization. Why do these brothers feel the need to traverse the earth speaking against Brother Lee and reinterpreting the facts for their own ends? If there is anything to their claims, why haven't the saints arrived at the same conclusions without their help? Hasn't there been instead an imposition of sorts on their part? Further, some of these brothers have made the specific claim that among us there are seven (and maybe eight) apostles, arguing that Brother Lee is not the only apostle today. But when has Brother Lee ever said that he was an apostle at all, much less the only one today? Their clutching at a set number of apostles shows a truly positional, organizational mind. While Brother Lee hopes to perfect thousands into their God-given function as apostles, these brothers count being an apostle as a thing to be grasped and claim that only seven apostles exist, among whom they would certainly place themselves. Their view of "seven apostles" is reminiscent of the cardinals of Roman Catholicism and the patriarchs of Eastern Orthodoxy.

Where is the real fire of organization today that warrants the sounding of the alarm? We hope that it is clear that there is no organization around which the saints are being united with great effort and promotion. Only a false alarm has gone forth, and confusion has been bred among the churches. And what is more pitiful is that we see the same tactics used by our brothers today that were used by the opposers outside some years back. Terms like "cult," which were given no clear definition and yet played on the fears of people, were flung at us, and so-called experts spoke out against us, relying only on the strength of their reputations and not on the presentation of genuine evidence. Today, the discontented brothers hurl terms like "organization" and "leader" in accusation against Brother Lee but do not bother to say exactly how there is organization and how Brother Lee is a leader. They rely on the fears of the saints and then bolster their claims with the strength of their standing in the churches. Anyone else making these claims would be ignored. We are forced then to make clear the meanings of the terms they use and to expose the tactics they employ. We are sorry that they have so risked and have so abused the respect they have gained among the saints, but we will not stand idly by and silently watch them malign the Lord's doings today.

Having exposed the bugaboo of organization, we wish to also comment on the "great effort and promotion" and the uniting of the saints and the churches that John feels exist among us. Again, John chose his terms to give the most offense. All the saints know the evils of promotion and the error of mere unity, so John's words do not accuse the churches of organization and improper leadership alone, but also of promoting things and of attempting mere unity. It should be borne clearly in mind that the promotion that he speaks of can be none other than the declarations of support for and the recommendations of Brother Lee's ministry made frequently by the saints in all the churches. Thus, it is the saints that John is assailing with this accusation. We find it most unwise for anyone, especially one who calls himself a servant of the Lord, to assail the saints so casually.

The Gentile prophet Balaam was not allowed to go this far (Num. 22—24). If the saints have promoted anything, is it John Ingall's responsibility to correct the great Body of Christ? Have the saints no spirit within so that it becomes necessary for a "prophet" like John to stand up and cry out as Haggai or Jeremiah did? We do not believe so; rather, we believe that John's cry of alarm is something that emanates from himself.

Finally, on the matter of uniting the saints and the churches, John implies that the churches fall short of oneness and have settled only for a kind of unity. But it should be pointed out that the real problem with unity is in its deficiency, not in the fact that it exists at all. A unity is far short of the oneness that God desires, but there can be little doubt that the proper oneness has a unity to it. If there is only an organic oneness and no external unity, what kind of oneness is really there? This is the "oneness" of Christendom—a "oneness" that exists in name only and has no practical expression. The genuine oneness depends on the one divine life that pulsates in all the members of the Body. A unity, however, as we have employed the term in the Lord's recovery, depends on an agreement upon some external matter. Apparently, John feels that our following the ministry is an external basis of a mere unity and that the genuine oneness has been abandoned. So be it if the saints are uniting together under one ministry. If that ministry is indeed God's New Testament ministry, as we feel it is and as John has conceded on numerous recent occasions, what problem is there? The unity of the saints on this matter does not damage their genuine oneness.

To conclude, the brother whom Brother Lee once called "the fireman" has reported a three-alarm fire. Many have been stirred up because of who sounded the alarm. But we must declare that there is no fire and that the fireman has abused the respect given to him by the churches. There is no organization taking shape in the Lord's recovery today; there is no problem with the saints following "those whose teaching and practice is in accordance with the truth of the Word of God." But there is an attack going on against the saints who once peacefully enjoyed the ministry of Brother Lee, and there is a shameful defamation occurring against the brothers and sisters simply because they want not only to be one, but also to speak the same thing.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ACCUSATION CONCERNING CONFORMING THE CHURCHES TO THE BURDEN OF THE MINISTRY AND MAKING THEM IDENTICAL

John Ingalls charges the churches with exercising “much pressure with full expectation that all the saints and the churches will conform to the burden of the ministry and be identical with one another in full conformity of practice, to carry it out.” Because of this, he has decided “to withdraw from the duties and responsibilities of the eldership.” No one is identified as the source of this great pressure with full expectation, so once again we are compelled to unravel this charge fully, as we have had to do on the first two. There can only be three possible sources of the alleged pressure: Brother Lee, his co-workers, or the saints in the churches. We should examine each of these three parties and see whether any is guilty of the charges.

But before doing this, we must carefully scrutinize the charges. John says that pressure is being applied with the expectation that all the saints and the churches will (1) “conform to the burden of the ministry” and (2) “be identical with one another in full conformity of practice.” The question is, Are these expectations indeed wrong? We believe that the first is certainly not. Whether conformity to the burden of the ministry is proper or not, depends on what the burden of the ministry is. If the ministry expects the churches to conform to something that is not according to God’s Word, then conformity would be improper. But what is the burden of the ministry today? Is it not quite simply the priestly service of the gospel, the organic building up of the Body of Christ, the perfecting by the gifts, and the proper gatherings full of prophesying that organically build up the church? Who can find fault with this burden without at once being condemned, not by men, but by the Scriptures? But John has said that these matters are not the problem (see chapter 19). Is there then a problem with the hope and expectation that the churches and the saints would conform to this burden? We cannot see how. These matters are clearly central matters in the New Testament, and to conform to them is to conform to the Lord’s heart for the church. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul frequently exhorted the saints to speak and even think the same thing (Rom. 15:5-6; 1 Cor: 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:2; 4:2). Could this be understood as anything but an expectation that the churches and the saints would conform to the same burden that he had? We do not believe so. It would be a glory to our God and Father if the saints and the churches would conform to the same burden (Rom. 15:6).

And what of the second matter, the expectation that the saints and the churches would “be identical with one another in full conformity of practice”? Suffice it to say that though it would be very nice if all the churches were identical not only in essence, but also in practice, it is a bit too much to expect. Brother Lee has made this clear in one of his recent publications:

It is altogether wise and profitable that we do not expect all the churches to be the same. This is impossible. Even twelve brothers within a local church cannot be the same in everything. If a local church has a burden to visit people in their homes for the preaching of the gospel, they should carry out this commission. They do not need to say that others do not preach the gospel in this way. If others do not feel to preach the gospel by visiting people in their homes, that is not your business. Do not talk about who is for the ministry or who is for the church. We should not talk in this way. We should not label ourselves or label others. If we want to practice a certain thing, we can do it. If others do not want to practice it, they have the liberty not to practice it. We should not question who is for a certain thing and who is not for a certain thing. This does not help you or anyone else. We all must endeavor to keep the oneness of the Spirit so that the Body of Christ can build up itself in love (Eph. 4:3, 16). (A Timely Word, pg. 41)

To expect the saints and the churches to conform to the burden of the ministry accords with what we see in the New Testament, but to expect them to be identical in practice is altogether unwise and unprofitable. Hence, with the first expectation there is no problem. And, based upon the exhortation above, the second expectation does not exist at all, at least in Brother Lee's mind.

If there is a problem at all, it is not with any supposed expectations; hence, it must be with the supposed pressure. Now we must examine the three possible culprits—Brother Lee, his co-workers, or the saints in the churches—and attempt to understand whom John means to accuse.

First, Brother Lee. We have established, based on the quote above, that Brother Lee cannot be accused of pressuring the saints and churches to conform in practice, the second expectation. Can he honestly be accused of pressuring the saints and the churches to conform to the burden of the ministry? That they should conform in this specific way has been demonstrated above, but has he ever attempted to pressure the saints and the churches to do what is right for them according to the revelation in the Scriptures? We do not believe so. He has never forced any saint or church to receive his ministry; he has never “excommunicated” any saint or church that did not wish to receive his ministry; he has never even maligned any saint or church that did not wish to receive his ministry. He has, however, strongly emphasized what the Lord has given him, and with this many have taken exception. They would prefer him not to speak what he speaks, but rather to follow a course that better corresponds to their tastes and inclinations. But the minister is not free to follow the tastes and inclinations of even his own heart (cf. Acts 16:6-7). The “pressure” that they speak of, as far as Brother Lee is concerned, is the content of Brother Lee's ministry, which they have always been free to ignore. When the ministry began to present things not to their liking, it became “pressure.” But what kind of pressure is this, if it can so easily be ignored? It is not pressure at all.

Second, the co-workers. Is “much pressure” being exerted by the co-workers to make the saints and the churches conform to the burden of the ministry and to be identical in practice? Hardly so. Indeed, there have been some co-workers who have gone out to share with the churches what the burden of the ministry is and how to carry out that burden by means of many helpful practices. But was pressure ever exercised? Did they ever threaten the churches into conformity? Did they ever tell any church that if it did not conform there would be serious consequence? Absolutely not! In fact, as we have mentioned before, there was always a warm reception to the coming of the co-workers, even to the extent that in one place several churches wrote a letter attesting to the profit they gained from the time with them. This place, however, now says that they were being controlled through this visit. Further, to how many places did co-workers go out to speak the burden of the ministry and to report what has been practiced? There are hundreds of churches on the earth, but co-workers have only reached a handful in their going out. The speaking by the co-workers can hardly be termed “much pressure” since they have touched such a limited number of churches.

Third, the saints in the churches. Perhaps the saints in the churches have exercised “much pressure” to conform the churches to the burden of the ministry and to make themselves identical in practice to carry out that burden. If that is the case, Hallelujah! They are thinking and speaking the same thing as the ministry, and doing so at their own behest. Will John jump out of the boat simply because the mates will not pull oars to his commands? Let us assume, for the sake of discussion, that the saints are absolutely wrong, that it is wrong for them to pressure each other to conform and to be identical. Let us assume that there is a malignant understanding in the minds of the saints concerning what oneness is (though there is no such thing at all). What should we do? John withdrew from his responsibilities and duties in protest. If all the saints in all the churches are wrong in this respect, which is not something idolatrous, immoral, or sinful, what can we do except go to the meetings and praise the Lord? We can pray that the Lord would properly guide us, but we should not resign. Resignation is the way of the world, not the way of a family. Yet, as we have said, this is John’s right.

When all is said and done, it is difficult to point the finger at anyone and say that this one has pressured the saints and the churches. Further, when one stops to consider the expectations that John speaks against, one finds that one expectation is not so bad and is in fact desirous according to the New Testament and that the other is not an expectation that exists at all. Over these matters he has taken such drastic steps. In our view, no other charge made by John Ingalls illustrates so clearly how petty the issues are that motivate his actions.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ACCUSATION CONCERNING THE SIGNING OF A LETTER BY OVER FOUR HUNDRED BROTHERS

John Ingalls has taken issue with a letter that was written during the February 1986 elders' training and signed by over 400 brothers attending those meetings. For the sake of clear discussion of this matter, we reproduce below the letter and Brother Lee's response as it appears, with a short introduction by Brother Lee, in *The Life-Pulse of the Lord's Present Move, Elders' Training—Book 8*, pages 153-155. We have numbered the sentences of the two letters for easy reference to particular statements.

I received a long letter of twenty seven pages on the morning of our final day of fellowship in this elders' training. The first page is the contents of the letter and all the rest of the twenty-six pages are signatures. All of the signatures are designated from the different churches. After reading the contents, I am so grateful to the four hundred and nineteen brothers who signed it. The contents of this letter follow along with my letter of response to the brothers who signed it.

February 21, 1986
Anaheim, California

Dear Brother Lee,

[1] After hearing your fellowship in this elders' training, we all agree to have a new start in the Lord's recovery. [2] 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. [3] We further agree to practice the recovery one in: teaching, practice, thinking, speaking, essence, appearance, and expression.

[4] We repudiate all differences among the churches, and all indifference toward the ministry, the ministry office, and the other churches. [5] We agree that the church in our place be identical with all the local churches throughout the earth.

[6] We also agree to follow your leading as the one who has led us into its practice. [7] 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.

[8] We further agree to practice the church life in our locality absolutely in a new way: [8a] to build the church in, through, and based upon home meetings; [8b] to lead every member to get used to functioning without any idea to depend on any giant speakers; [8c] to teach all the saints to know the basic truths in an educational way that they may teach others for the spreading of the truth; [8d] to build up the saints in the growth in life that they may minister life to others,

shepherd each other, and take care of the backsliding ones; [8e] to lead all the saints to preach the gospel in every possible way; [8f] to avoid leadership as much as possible; and [8g] to have home gatherings for nurturing the saints in life and big meetings for educating the saints in truths.

[9] We agree that all the preceding points are the clear and definite teaching of the Bible according to God's New Testament economy.[10] Finally, we agree that the success of this new move is our responsibility and will rise up to labor and endeavor with our whole being, looking to the Lord for His mercy and grace that we would be faithful to the end.

Your brothers for the Lord's recovery

April 11, 1986

The Brothers attending the February 1986
Elders' Training

Dear Brothers:

[11] Thank you for your letter dated February 21, 1986 with the list of signatures. [12] I feel very sorry that I could not have time to acknowledge, with appreciation, what you have expressed in your letter and through your signatures until now.

[13] Being one with the ministry is a crucial matter, and its effects are exceedingly serious. [14] Its proper definition is not to follow any man, any doctrine or any movement, but is to be one with the Lord's move today according to the Lord's vision, without any intrinsic element of exalting any person or promoting any work. [15] May the Lord be merciful and gracious to us, that this action would not be misunderstood or misapplied by anyone in a way that would give the enemy Satan ground for utilization, thus frustrating the Lord's move today, but rather that this action could be properly used by the Lord to swallow up all the germs of discord which have been existing, even among us, for quite a time in the past. [16] May the Lord remember your kind wishes for me and bless your labors in Him.

Your brother in Christ,
Witness Lee

With regard to the letter from the brothers and the charges made by John against it, we feel that four points must be made. By presenting these points, we hope that the composing of the letter, the signing of it by the brothers, and Brother Lee's response to it will be better understood.

First, John has every right to retract anything he has ever said, done, or set signature to. That he would do so proves that people change and that former affections can be easily rejected. And we believe that this is the crux of the problem in this whole matter. It

evident that John has changed and is now different from what we once knew him to be. But that he has changed and in so doing wishes to retract his signature from the letter should be interpreted as no more than that; his retraction does not annul the letter nor the signatures of the other 417 signing brothers. All the brothers who signed are equally indwelt by the Spirit and are equally joined to Christ their Head. If a brother wishes to dissent from the signing, that does not mean that the other 417 brothers have made a tragic mistake and have misunderstood the leading of the Lord within. We trust the spirits of the other brothers as well, not just that of John Ingalls. In fact, the weight of the signatures still in place causes one to question the validity of the complaint being made by John. We respect his feeling in this matter, but we do not have to follow him in it. If his conscience will not allow him to participate in this letter, he must not participate. But we all must realize that this is a conscience matter and not a tenet of faith and that others who have the freedom of conscience to participate in the letter should be respected as well.

Second, we are afraid that John has attempted to make the signing of the letter not merely a conscience matter but more so an infraction of the truth and by doing so implicitly condemns the brothers who will not follow in his retraction. To demonstrate our concern, we wish to quote John's words exactly:

We agreed in that letter that we would be identical with all the churches, that we would follow the ministry absolutely, and that we realized that Brother's Lee leading was indispensable to our oneness. Then, at the bottom of the letter, we said that all these things were according to the teaching of the Word of God. But those things are not according to the teaching of the Word, and we regret very much that we subscribed to them.

John's summary of the points corresponds to sentences 5, 6, 7, and 9 of the letter. He wishes to insist that these points are not according to the teaching of the Word. But not all will agree with his assessment of what is in the Word of God. Many brothers believe that the local churches should be identical, just as the seven golden lampstands in Revelation 1 were identical. Many believe that differences that exist from one church to the other are differences in negative matters, just as the discernable differences between the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 are in negative matters. Many brothers believe that the early churches were following the lead of the Apostle Paul, and because of this these brothers are happy to follow the lead of those ones who today teach and practice according to the teaching of the Bible. Many brothers genuinely believe that in the New Testament accepting and following the ministry of the apostles was the practical way for all the early churches to be one and that such a following was indispensable to their oneness, and because of this these brothers wish to emulate the early believers in this respect. Many brothers believe that there should be only one trumpet sounding in the Lord's ministry and that according to the Scriptures there is, by God's design, always one master builder, as Paul was in his day. What these brothers believe is not without at least

some foundation in the Bible, so how can John say so boldly that these matters are not according to the teaching of the Word? He speaks as if he were the sole authority on the teaching of the Bible. If he feels that these are not according to the Bible and hence he should withdraw his signature, he is free to do so. But why must he make the matter sound as though all the other brothers are going against the Word of God? This kind of strong denunciation is the real factor of division among us today.

John would further have us believe that in the letter 419 brothers agreed that sentences 5 through 7 alone were “the clear and definite teaching of the Bible...” But that is not what the letter says, for a great omission has been made by John. John does not give a summary of sentence 8, which contains a lengthy listing of points concerning the carrying out of the burden in the Lord’s recovery [8a-g]. None of these points can be characterized as being “not according to the teaching of the Word.” And it may very well be that some brothers took the words “all the preceding points” in sentence 9 to refer to the points listed in sentence 8. If they did, are they to be condemned for signing the letter, when in their own hearts they believed that points 8a-g are “the clear and definite teaching of the Bible...”?

John has not substantiated his claim that what the brothers set their signatures to is not according to the teaching of the Word. Again, he hurls a charge at these brothers without regard for the feeling of their own consciences and trusts that the mere utterance of such a bold charge will suffice.

Third, John says that “there is no precedent of that [i.e., the signing of such a letter] in the Word.” This is true indeed. We find nowhere in the New Testament the signing of a letter by 419 brothers agreeing to be in one accord, to repudiate all differences, to follow the lead of those who led them further into God’s economy, etc. But while we do not find the expressing of agreement in this specific way in the Word, we do find instances that are in the spirit of this agreeing. The early saints in Jerusalem were in accord in Jerusalem, following the teaching and fellowship of the apostles (Acts 2:42). While much was being done through the hands of the apostles, the saints were in one accord (Acts 5:12). Later, the Macedonian believers, beyond what the apostles had hoped, gave themselves first to the Lord and then to the apostles through the will of God (2 Cor. 8:5). Throughout the Mediterranean area, the churches were in one accord to gather materials gifts for the needy saints in Jerusalem, a burden picked up and worked out by the ministry of the Apostle Paul (cf. Acts 11:27-30; Rom. 15:25-27 1 Cor. 16:3; 2 Cor. 8:1-2; Gal. 2:10). Need there be the precedent of the signing of a letter before brothers do so as an indication of their desire to be in one accord? If agreeing to be in one accord is according to the teaching of the Bible, what does it matter how a group of brothers expresses this agreement? If they have erred, they erred in the matter of one accord.

The letter written and signed by the brothers was a response to the truth that was put before them in the days of that training. It is safe to say that the Lord poured out richly in

those meetings, and when the Lord so dispenses, it is healthy for there to be a response in the recipients. John casts aspersion on the brothers who responded by means of the letter, making it sound as if their response is in opposition to the Word of God. But we feel that the letter was a healthy response of gratitude, repentance, and consecration, and we believe that many saints feel so as well. If John wishes to withdraw any gratitude he may have felt earlier in response to those messages, it is between him and the Lord. But it is not a private matter when he begins to broadcast his decision in such a way as to bring the actions of the other brothers who signed into ill-repute. This is an unkind action on his part.

Finally, we should bring to the reader's attention Brother Lee's letter of response, which contains both a balancing word and a prayer. In sentence 14 particularly Brother Lee clearly defines what being one with the ministry is. He rejects any notion of following a man, of exalting a person, or of promoting a work. Further, he points out that to be one with the ministry is "to be one with the Lord's move today according to the Lord's vision..." If there had been any misconception of what being one with the ministry is, Brother Lee's word served to correct it. He appreciated the brothers heart but was careful to provide for any misconceptions. He also prayed that the brothers' action would not be misunderstood or misapplied by anyone so as to give ground to the enemy and thus allow him to frustrate the Lord's move. We are saddened that the events of the last few years have turned out as they have, for indeed some have misunderstood and misapplied the good heart of the brothers who signed that letter and have given Satan ground to cause trouble in the churches. In the end, what John thought was a genuine concern turned out to be a tool of destruction in the hand of the enemy.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ACCUSATION CONCERNING AN EMPHASIS ON A KIND OF CENTRALIZATION OF THE CHURCHES AND THE WORK

John charges that "there has been quite an emphasis, at least in practice, on a kind of centralization of the churches and the work, which we also find contrary to the Word of God." He does not make his charge directly in a more simple way, saying, "There has

been a centralization of the churches and the work.” He does not say that there has been a centralization, but rather an emphasis on it. He does not say that the emphasis is thoroughgoing, but rather that it is “at least in practice.” He does not even say that the centralization is fully a centralization, but rather that it is “a kind of centralization.” It seems to us that his charge, when fully stated, vanishes into thin air. John’s charge then is this: There is no actual centralization of the churches and the work, but rather only an emphasis on only a kind of centralization, and that emphasis is really only in the realm of practice, not in the realm of standing or expression.

If there is no actual centralization, why does John make an issue of it? What benefit does that have for the saints and the churches? This kind of nebulous accusation serves only to ill-affect the minds of the saints. There is not enough substance in this kind of accusation to reprove anyone. Rather it introduces germs that destroy the peace among the saints. This is a sowing of discord that is abominable to the Lord (Prov. 6:16, 19).

But John could not have said in a clear and definite fashion, “There has been a centralization of the churches and the work,” because there is no centralization of the churches taking place today and there is no centralization of the work. We wish to consider each of these points below.

To charge that there is a centralization of the churches is a serious matter, for centralization is against what has been practiced by the churches since the days of Brother Nee. Centralization is the act of concentrating the authority of several groups into a single governing entity so as to bring the administration of those groups under a single source of control. To charge that there has been a centralization of the churches is to charge that the administration of the local churches has come under a single authority. This is what happened historically to the Latin-speaking churches during the first millennium A.D. The administration of these churches came under the single authority of one church, the church in Rome, and eventually of one person, the Pope. We ask then, Has there actually been a centralization of the churches? Has the authority of the many local churches been concentrated under a single source of control, under Brother Lee, under his office, under his co-workers, under a particular church that follows his ministry? No! Is there a local church on the earth today that must go to any of these for permission to do anything? No! Do edicts flow from any of these directing the actions of any local church? No! We believe that John is confusing the desire of some local churches to follow Brother Lee and his ministry with “a kind of centralization of the churches.” But there is a big difference between the desire of a church to follow the ministry and its administration being centralized. A church is free to follow Brother Lee’s ministry, to practice what he is speaking, and to support him as they will, just as another church is free not to do so. That this freedom exists confirms the non-centralized nature of the churches today, even in their practice. But John wishes to relabel a church’s desire to follow Brother Lee’s ministry closely as “a kind of centralization.” Actually, he is the

one who commits an injustice, because he will not tolerate the free decision of any church to do what he does not agree with. In fact, so intolerant is he that he felt compelled to resign from the duties and responsibilities of the eldership of his local church, which has decided to hold to Brother Lee's ministry.

On the one hand, John has confused the desire of the churches to hold to Brother Lee's ministry with the centralization of the churches; on the other hand, he has confused the coordination among some co-workers with the centralization of the work, though this coordination is in accord with the New Testament. Many brothers have dedicated themselves to a close coordination with Brother Lee in carrying out what the Lord has given him in His recovery. We do not find this action erroneous, for many brothers in the New Testament dedicated themselves to a close coordination with Paul in carrying what was given to him by the Lord. In the matters of their work, they took their directions from Paul without hesitation, and the Holy Spirit sanctions this arrangement by recording its great profit. They were under Paul's direction because they had been brought into the work of the ministry by Paul. It was only fitting that they would follow Paul's direction in the work. But not all the work in the New Testament was under Paul's direction. The ministry to the circumcision was entrusted to James and Cephas and John (Gal. 2:8-9). Apollos moved freely in carrying out his portion in the ministry and was not subject to Paul's directing (1 Cor. 16:12). Barnabas, long after the dissension between him and Paul in Acts 15, was traveling among the churches with apparently no direction from Paul (Col. 4:10). Zenas the lawyer also worked independently of Paul (Tit. 3:13). These brothers were not brought into the work by Paul, so they did not need to be directed by Paul. Hence, there was no centralization of the work. There was, however, fellowship between all these workers as Acts and the letters of Paul indicate.

Are the brothers who have dedicated themselves to a close coordination with Brother Lee wrong for doing so according to the Word? Absolutely not! In fact, they follow the pattern in the Word precisely, because they follow the lead of the one who brought them into the work. John wishes to cast off a close coordination with Brother Lee in the work, even though he was brought into the work of the Lord's recovery by Brother Lee. This is "contrary to the Word of God"; it is also contrary to a proper humanity that respects those who have contributed to one's good for years and years. Can John deny that Brother Lee has brought him into the work of the Lord's recovery? If he would, why did he follow Brother Lee's ministry so closely for so many years? Why was he not about his own labors from the day he saw the vision of the Lord's recovery?

Even if John were making a clear and definite charge concerning centralization of the churches and the work, he would have no basis for it. Thus, the nebulous charge that he does make is certainly without foundation. We regret that he has caused so much trouble with such a charge.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ACCUSATION CONCERNING PERVASIVE CONTROL

Because the accusation John makes concerning the exercise of pervasive control requires careful examination, we will analyze this section sentence by sentence.

“There has been,” John asserts, “a pervasive control over the church.” John’s use of the present perfect tense indicates that in his opinion control was not only exercised in the past but continues to be exercised today. The word “pervasive” is very important here. The verb pervade means to become diffused throughout every part of something. The adjective pervasive denotes that which pervades, especially in such a way as to be prevalent or dominant. The word control means to exercise restraint or direction over, to dominate or to command. Finally, in this sentence the word church is used generically to refer to any and all local churches.

Now we can see what John is actually saying. His accusation is that there has been and still is the exercise of domination, command, restraint, and direction over every aspect of the church life in every church. This is the meaning of the words “pervasive control.” For control over the church to be pervasive means that this control permeates every part of the church in such a way as to be prevalent and dominant. Therefore, John is saying that the dominant and prevalent thing in the church is control. Since this supposed control is allegedly pervasive, it must then pervade every aspect of the church: the time, nature, and content of all church meetings; the arrangement of and the materials used in the children’s meeting; the finances of the church, including the counting and recording of offerings; all the practical service in the church; the arrangement of home meetings and small group meetings. This is only a partial list. From the foregoing we can see that John’s accusation, when examined carefully and reduced logically, turns out to be not only baseless and false but also absurd and self-refuting.

After making a general accusation, John modifies his view somewhat in the next two sentences: “At least I can speak for Anaheim. I know this to be a fact, and I’m in a position to know this.” In his speaking here John is invoking executive privilege, affirming a position of authority to speak definitively. Concerning these remarks, we would raise a number of questions. When these words were spoken, was John a proper spokesman for the church in Anaheim? Did he represent all the elders? Did he truly express the feeling of the church? To what extent did John’s misuse of his position in the eldership during the previous year and a half negate his standing to speak for the church? How fair and unbiased is his characterization of the alleged control? To what extent is

what he claims to “know” merely an expression of his personal feelings and opinions? Has not John himself exercised a kind of control over the church? If so, how has this affected his perception of the control supposedly exercised by others? To what extent is John’s accusation concerning control based upon abnormal spiritual perception? Why does John seem to minimize the fact that other elders and also the majority of the saints have views that differ greatly from his? Why is there no indication of listening to others and genuinely hearing them? What reason is there for any discerning saint to accept John’s statements at face value? Does he expect others to accept his views simply because he, a brother once reputed to be of stature, is speaking them? All these questions are relevant to John’s appeal to and exercise of executive privilege and therefore deserve an answer.

John goes on to say, “There has been much outside influence exercised upon the church which has made it very difficult to go on by getting our leading directly from the Lord.” The question of “outside influence” will be considered shortly. At this point we would like to consider the matter of a local church getting its “leading directly from the Lord.”

Concerning many things related to its church life, a local church can and should get its leading directly from the Lord. When should the Lord’s table meeting be held? What should be the schedule of meetings? What arrangements should there be for children’s meeting? How should the financial affairs be managed? What verses should be recommended for morning watch? How should the practical service be arranged and the meeting hall and grounds maintained? In these and other similar matters, a local church should get its leading directly from the Lord. However, this does not apply to a matter such as defining the truth. Truth is defined by the apostles in their teaching, not by the elders in their administration. According to the New Testament, it is not up to each church to define its own doctrine or to determine its own standing.

Along with getting its leading concerning its local affairs directly from the Lord, a proper local church will also get its leading indirectly through the ministry of the apostles and through the universal fellowship of the Body. Let us look briefly at the former and then at the latter.

In Revelation 2 and 3 the Lord Jesus spoke a particular word to each of the seven churches. This word may be regarded as the Lord’s leading for that church. But how was this word given? How was it mediated? Did the Lord Jesus manifest Himself to each church directly, separately, and individually and then speak a word directly to that church? No! The Lord first spoke to the Apostle John and then through him to the churches. Revelation 1 makes this crystal clear. The revelation of Jesus Christ was made known to John (v. 1), who then wrote “to the seven churches which are in Asia” (v. 4a). The Lord Jesus appeared to him and said, “What you see write in a book and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea” (v. 11). The revelation was not given to the

churches directly; it was given directly to John, who then wrote to the churches. Hence, the churches received the revelation indirectly through John. If the churches had not been open to receive John's ministry, especially his writings, they would not and could not have received this revelation from the Lord.

In Revelation 2 and 3 we see that not only the revelation as a whole was mediated through John but also that the particular word to each church was conveyed from the Lord to the churches through him. "To the messenger of the church in Ephesus write: These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands" (Rev. 2:1). Yes, the Lord spoke expressly to Ephesus, but He did not speak directly to Ephesus. The Lord spoke, John wrote, and the church received. The same is true with the other six churches (2:8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). Each church received its word, its leading, from the Lord through John. To reject John's writing was to reject the Lord's speaking, for the Lord's word was conveyed through John's writing. In this situation the Lord's leading was given through this apostle's ministry. The principle is the same today concerning certain aspects of the going on of the local churches. Often the Lord will lead the churches indirectly through the teaching and fellowship of the apostles.

The ministry of the Apostle Paul demonstrates that for the churches to go on normally they need to receive the apostles' ministry. Paul's teaching was the same universally, that is, in all the churches. This was the reason he could say, "As I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Cor. 4:17). Paul even gave directions to the churches (1 Cor. 7:17; 16:1). Paul's teaching and direction laid down certain governing principles for the churches to follow in their going on according to the Lord's direct leading. Surely the Lord's direct leading of a local church will be in keeping with the principles laid down by His apostles. It is hard to imagine any church that rejected Paul's ministry going on with the Lord in a normal, healthy way. If we want the Lord's direct leading, we need to honor and receive His indirect leading given through the ministry of the apostles.

A local church will also receive some amount of indirect leading through participating in the fellowship of the Body. The churches do not control one another, but they do build one another and support one another. The more a church has fellowship with the other churches, the more that church, without having anyone interfere in its affairs, will receive light and supply. Furthermore, such fellowship will help to preserve a given church from deviation, from the disposition and peculiarity of certain strong ones who may unduly influence the direction of the church, and from the tendency to lose the vision of God's universal building and the consciousness of the one Body and thereby become individualistic and localistic. All the local churches are one Body, and it is normal, proper, and healthy for the Lord to lead a particular church indirectly through the fellowship of the Body. Such a leading is not in the least organizational; on the contrary, it is altogether organic.

Any church that isolates itself from fellowship with the other churches will not remain in a normal situation. We all need to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev. 2:7a). Yes, in Revelation 2 and 3 there is a specific word of the Lord to each particular church, but this word is also the word of the Spirit to all the churches. This indicates that a local church should hear not only the word spoken to her particularly but should also hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches universally. The word of the Lord to one church becomes the speaking of the Spirit to all the churches. To have the Lord’s leading in our local church we need to give heed not only to what the Lord says to our church but also to what the Spirit says to the churches. It is deplorable indeed for any saint or any church not to have an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches!

Paul’s word in Ephesians 2:21 and 22 indicates that if we are to have the proper and normal building up of the church in our locality, we need to be rightly related to the Body universally. Verse 21 says, “In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord.” This is a word concerning the universal building. Verse 22 goes on to say, “In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.” This is a word concerning the local building. It is significant that here Paul speaks first of the universal building and then of the local building; he speaks first of “all the building” and then of “you also.” Moreover, Paul’s use of also in verse 22 subordinates the local building in that verse to the universal building in verse 21. This indicates that we need to have a vision of and concern for the building up of the Body universally in order to have the proper building up of the church locally. We should care for the “you also” but even the more for “all the building.” Further, we should be conscious not only of our local church but also of the entire Body. Such a care and consciousness will help us to receive the genuine leading of the Lord regarding the going on of the church in our locality. Having this leading, we will not do anything locally that will damage the Body universally.

We mention all this in relation to John’s word about a local church’s going on by getting its leading “directly from the Lord.” Getting this leading is not as simple as John’s words seem to indicate. If a church wants the Lord’s leading in full, that church needs to seek the Lord, to be one with the apostles in their ministry, and to be in the fellowship of the one Body. This ministry and this fellowship will not control us, but it may have the effect of purifying us and of proving whether we have really laid aside our private interests and have joined with the apostles and the Triune God for the carrying out of God’s purpose.

John concludes his section on control by saying, “This control has not been exercised so much directly, but very much indirectly, through videos, conferences, trainings, and elders’ meetings.” In response to this, we have three observations to make.

First, we see that here John further modifies his accusation concerning control. He begins by saying that control is pervasive, he continues by limiting himself to Anaheim, and he concludes by claiming that the control is not direct but indirect. By taking such a line of development John modifies his primary accusation to such an extent that it is reduced virtually to nothing. What is first called pervasive control is eventually called indirect control. Such vacillating serves only to obfuscate the issue. What we are left with - and this is the damaging factor here - is a vague, groundless, unsupported accusation concerning control.

Second, John asserts that control is exercised through videos, conferences, trainings, and elders' meetings. Regarding this we would make two comments. First, this accusation is absurd, for none of these four things is an element of control. A local church may or may not use videos at its discretion. Conferences are for imparting a vision, teaching the truth, and ministering the life supply. In the last fifteen years the trainings have served mainly to open up the Word of God and to minister the riches of the Word to the saints. The elders' meetings have been for fellowship and for the proper exercise of genuine leadership (see our third observation below), not for control.

Second, concerning videos, conferences, trainings, and elders' meetings, it is doubtful that John is in a special position to know anything. This fact is contrary to his previous statement that he is in a position to know about the control allegedly exercised over the church in Anaheim. On the one hand, John claims to have privileged knowledge about control; on the other hand, he specifies as the means of control four things about which he does not have privileged knowledge. All the churches, not just Anaheim, know about the function of videos, conferences, and trainings. All the elders, not just John, know about the nature, content, purpose, and goal of elders' meetings. It is the strong testimony of the churches and the elders in the churches that videos, conferences, trainings, and elders' meetings have not been means of exercising control. John's accusation is false. Furthermore, his own words undercut his supposed standing in making the accusation.

Third, John is directing his accusation toward the person and ministry of Brother Lee. John is saying that Brother Lee has exercised "pervasive control" over the church, that Brother Lee's ministry is the "outside influence" that has interfered with the going on of the church in Anaheim. That Brother Lee is the target is made plain by John's word about videos, conferences, trainings, and elders' meetings, all of which are related to Brother Lee's ministry. John is saying, therefore, that Brother Lee uses his ministry, which John regards as an outside influence, to exercise pervasive control over the churches. This is the crux of John's accusation concerning control.

The truth is that Brother Lee does not control the churches. His teaching is a source of vision and supply, and his fellowship is a means of direction, but neither his teaching nor his fellowship is a means of controlling the churches or any saint in the churches. John knows very well that often [when brothers have sought help or guidance from Brother Lee](#)

[he has encouraged them to pray.](#) Brother Lee is an outstanding example of not exercising control and has labored to help the elders to realize that they should not control the churches or the saints. We wish to testify on behalf of our brother that he does not control the churches. We believe that hundreds of churches and thousands of saints can give the same testimony. We are sorry that John's view, feeling, and perception regarding control do not correspond to the actual situation.

We further regret that John's words indicate that he does not see the difference between genuine and proper leadership and control. According to the New Testament, the apostles lead but they do not control. In *One Accord for the Lord's Move* Brother Lee says, "I have been with the Lord's recovery for fifty-five years, since 1932. In all these years I have not controlled anyone. I do not have the intention to control anybody or to exercise any control. But we do need a proper leadership" (p. 127). To those who consider themselves competent for leadership Brother Lee says, "If anyone of you could rise up to render the Lord's recovery the proper leadership, I would be the first to follow you, to take your leadership. But what kind of direction can you give us? How much truth do you know? Could you open up the entire New Testament from Matthew to Revelation in a detailed way to bring the churches into the depths of God's New Testament economy?" (p. 127). Because Brother Lee can do this and in fact has done it, we accept his ministry with its leadership, a leadership that supplies and offers sound direction but no control. There are others, however, who presume to lead but actually do little more than control.

In the Lord's recovery we are not controlled, and we should not be controlled, by any person, but we are controlled, and we should be controlled, by the divine revelation, by the heavenly vision of God's New Testament economy. Paul could say, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19). The words "not disobedient" imply obedience, and obedience implies submission to authority. A vision that can be obeyed must be a vision that possesses authority, a vision that can rule, govern, regulate, and control. Furthermore, Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision the people cast off restraint" (Darby). The heavenly vision restrains; it restricts. On the one hand, it restrains the tendency toward lawlessness; on the other hand, it restricts us to the central lane of God's New Testament economy. We testify that we are not controlled by Brother Lee, but we are controlled by the vision, the revelation, that has been imparted to us by the Lord through our brother's ministry.

In this light, we would ask the reader to consider Brother Lee's word on revelation, leadership, and control (*The God-ordained Way to Practice the New Testament Economy*, p. 172):

The leadership in the New Testament ministry in actuality is not the leadership of one controlling person. In the Lord's recovery we reject the notion of one person controlling persons and matters. We do have some leadership, but not the leadership of one controlling person. Instead, we have the leadership of one controlling revelation in the

one ministry through those who bring in the revelation of the ministry. The revelation controls, and it controls through those who bring in the revelation. The revelation in the Lord's recovery controls us and restricts us....The leadership is not the leadership of any single person who is controlling people in the Lord's recovery. The leadership in the Lord's recovery is the leadership of the God-given revelation that restricts us, directs us, and controls us so that confusion and division can be avoided.

Brother Lee's word is true, and he has been true to his word. We would echo this word by saying that we are not under the control of any person, but we are under the control of the vision, the revelation, of God's New Testament economy. Such a controlling vision is crucial to our oneness and to our going on in the Lord's recovery. Obeying this vision leads to peace and oneness; disobeying it results in confusion and division.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE ACCUSATION CONCERNING THE LORD'S RECOVERY BECOMING A DENOMINATION

John then goes on to charge the churches with going down a path that will eventually lead us to become a denomination. We believe that John realizes how much this hurts the heart of every saint who hears it, and we believe that John is counting on that pain to bolster his claims. We find this kind of tactic most offensive and condemn the use of it as being a tool of destruction among the churches. How many saints have been stumbled by these words, which were spoken unnecessarily and, even worse, falsely!

We are amazed that John wishes to present himself to the saints as an expert on church history, when all the saints know him not to be such. But if that is his wish, we are compelled to test the integrity of his historiography. "Church history reveals" he boldly declares "that in the history of one denomination after another...the first step is affiliation under one leadership; the second is some sort of training center." John wishes to establish a cause-and-effect relationship: affiliation under one leadership and a training center cause a group to become a denomination. We would like to expose the fallacious nature of his presentation of church history.

First, John makes the common logical error of assuming that things that precede necessarily cause the things that temporally follow. For hundreds of years, this error in thought has been called the fallacy of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* ("after this, therefore because of this"). John argues that once a group affiliated under one leadership and set up a training center, it became a denomination. "From there on out, it was a full-blown

denomination,” he says. But this type of reasoning ignores what really causes a group to become a denomination. A denomination is what the word says it is, a group that has denominated itself so as to distinguish itself from others. The process of denominating causes the formation of a denomination, not the affiliation of several groups under one leadership and the establishment of a training center. It may be that many denominations had such developments in their histories, but these developments were not the things that made them denominations. If that were the case, we would expect every denomination to have followed the same course, but we do not find that this happened in every denomination in church history. John cannot so casually redefine the causes of denominations in order to support his interpretation of the facts.

Second, it has always been the view of those in the Lord’s recovery that there is always at any given time only one group of believers who bear the Lord’s corporate testimony. We hold this belief based on our understanding that God is one and that His testimony is always one. We realize that this view offends many, but in our hearts we are committed to it before the Lord, because we believe that this is what the divine revelation in the Scripture tells us. If that is the case and if we are the Lord’s present testimony at this time, we are forced to view all other Christian groups as not being the Lord’s present corporate testimony. That does not mean that the saints in these groups are not believers, that they do not have their personal testimony of the Lord before men, that they cannot be transformed, that they will not gain the kingdom reward, or that they are in any way inferior to the believers in the Lord’s recovery. It simply means that according to our conviction from the Word of God there is only one corporate testimony of the Lord on the earth at any given time, and that that one testimony is the practical expression of the universal church. All believers are in the universal church regardless of the group of Christians that they meet with, but not all Christians are in the practical expression of the universal church, which is that one corporate testimony that the Lord has on the earth.

With that in view, a Christian group can only go one of three directions: into extinction, into becoming a denomination, or into being the Lord’s testimony in its day. Historically, few groups have become extinct, but some have, such as the Waldenses. Further, we believe that only one group bears the Lord’s corporate testimony at any given time. Hence, the great majority of groups fall short of being the corporate expression of the universal church. Would John have us believe that in every case they fell short because they affiliated under one leadership and set up a training center? If he would, then any reasonable, thoughtful listener would refuse to believe him.

Third, even if John’s causal relationship were sound, the conditions needed to establish it are not met by the present situation in the Lord’s recovery. We have shown in our discussion of the previous points that there is no affiliation of the churches under one leadership. That would leave merely the setting up of a training center as the cause of our becoming a denomination, and to say that is simply ridiculous by anyone’s standards. In

fact, if setting up a training center were cause enough for a group to become a denomination, there would have been ample cause in Ephesus for the church there to become a denomination. According to Acts 19:9-10, Paul withdrew from the Jews and “separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this took place for two years, so that all those dwelling in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.” On this matter, F. F. Bruce writes, “So we must picture Paul spending the hours from daybreak to 11 AM at his manual labor (cf. xx. 34; I Cor. iv. 12), and then devoting the next five hours to the still more exhausting business of Christian dialectic” (p. 356). Paul was no doubt training the disciples during those two years, and the disciples were no doubt going out into the nearby region proclaiming what they had heard. The effect was so extensive that “all those dwelling in Asia heard the word of the Lord.” Will John declare to us that the church in Ephesus was in the regrettable and irreversible process of becoming a denomination?

John concludes this section with a particularly reckless statement. He says, “I just heard that two of the full-timers from Irving were serving their internship in the Church in Dallas, I thought: ‘What on earth is that!’” Based on hearsay, John makes false statements concerning certain full-timers, the training in Irving, and the church in Dallas. We are greatly surprised that John would take gossip and hearsay as a source, but this is precisely what he has done. John tells us, “I just heard recently....” Is this not a sign of listening to gossip, of receiving, and then transmitting, hearsay? It certainly is. From whom did John hear this? From the full-timers themselves? From a brother representing the training? From an elder in the church in Dallas? Or from someone spreading rumors? Did John verify the accuracy of this report by checking directly with those involved? If not, why not? We are appalled that John would receive and then repeat rumors such as this. It seems to us that he has done this in the attempt to lend credence to his baseless claims. Is this not a case of failing to “judge righteous judgment” but of judging “according to appearance” (John 7:24)?

What John says here is untrue. No one from the training in Irving served an “internship” anywhere, for the training simply does not have any interns. Contrary to John’s opinion, the training is not a Bible school or seminary. Some of the trainees preached the gospel in Dallas and also cared for new ones in Dallas. Sometimes they met with the church in Dallas. This does not make them interns. We are saddened by the fact that John’s words betray such an ignorance of what the trainees have been doing and of how they are related to the churches.

We would call the reader’s attention to these words spoken by John at the very end of this section: “What on earth is that!” We find the tone and spirit here very disturbing, even degrading and offensive. In our judgment, the tone, spirit, and attitude expressed in the above words are improper, unfitting, and inappropriate.

John has actually borne false witness against the trainees, against the training in Irving, and against the church in Dallas. He accuses the trainees of being interns, those who are undergoing professional training to become clergy. He accuses the training itself of being a kind of denominational training center. And he accuses the church in Dallas of supporting this and participating in it, and thereby of furthering a trend toward denominationalism. Concerning all this, John gives a false report. Is this not a very serious thing?

John's speaking here is wrong both in content and in spirit. Receiving and relaying gossip about the training, John has grossly misrepresented the training, the trainees, and the church in Dallas. It is our feeling, therefore, that he needs to accept correction in this matter and then give a public and written word of apology to the trainees, to the training, and to the church in Dallas.

CHAPTER NINE

THE ACCUSATION CONCERNING BROTHER WITNESS LEE'S BEING EXALTED AND HONORED ABOVE WHAT IS WRITTEN

John charges that "[Brother Lee] has been exalted and honored above what is written, according to 1 Corinthians 4:6." This charge is no doubt directed against the saints and the churches who wish to follow Brother Lee's ministry. Again, we question the wisdom of bringing an accusation against the people of God. John wishes to assail the entire family, and this is indeed a foolish thing to do. Will he separate himself from the saints and the churches because in his view there is error? The church is our home regardless of its perceived correctness. It is the Lord's privilege alone to declare that His people are off the mark, not John's. And it is not the Lord's way to lightly abandon His people as John desires to do.

The sheep are not going the way that John wants to lead them, so John will not go before the sheep. John has eighteen charges against the sheep which motivate him to withdraw from the eldership. It is not simply that he does not wish to lead the sheep, but that he does not wish to go the way the sheep are going. He is not simply going into the midst of the flock and allowing other sheep to lead the flock in his stead, but he is holding his ground and letting the sheep go on without him: In his view, he is right in eighteen matters and the sheep are wrong, so he will just let the sheep go on. But is being right (if he is really right) worth being left behind? Is being right worth the great loss of

not being with the sheep? He must decide this for himself, but as for us, we feel that being with the sheep is “the greatest joy on earth” and is not worth losing for any price.

But the question remains concerning the exaltation and honor supposedly being paid to Brother Lee by the saints and the churches. Again, as with many of John’s charges, we must examine the question in parts because actually two things are being charged. John claims (1) that Brother Lee is being exalted beyond what is written and (2) that Brother Lee is being honored beyond what is written. We will discuss the latter of these first since it is the charge that is more easily dispensed with.

Is it wrong to honor the ministers of God’s Word? Paul did not think so. In fact, to those elders who took up the additional burden of ministering the Word to their church, Paul recommended double honor (1 Tim. 5:17). No doubt this honor had its expression in the giving of material things, but that giving should have come out of the genuine honoring from the heart. If the elders who labor in word and in teaching are worthy of such honor, how much more those whose labor benefits all the churches. The Galatian saints honored Paul to the extent that they would have torn out their own eyes and given them to him when he was with them in illness (Gal. 4:15); they even received him as Christ Jesus Himself (Gal. 4:14). The islanders of Malta freely bestowed many honors on Paul and those with him even for simple kindnesses shown by him (Acts 28:10). Paul exhorts the saints to take the lead one with the other in showing honor (Rom. 12:10) and indicates that this is a norm in the living of the saints in the Body. Honoring others is a virtue that cannot be taken to excess, If the saints have honored Brother Lee excessively, who can condemn them? The Bible will not. It speaks to the glory of the saints if honoring is one of their excesses. And it speaks to John Ingalls’s shame if he is bothered about the honor paid by the saints. If he must stand his ground and say, There is too much honoring going on here, the Bible does not support this; he shows the smallness of his own heart and his own incapacity to honor others. Why does he not rejoice that there is an abundance of honor in the churches, that the saints so freely and so liberally bestow honor on Brother Lee and others who minister to their spiritual need? Is he jealous of the honor? If so, he needs only strive to an equal extent, and honor will no doubt be shown to him. Paul exhorts us to render honor to whom honor is due (Rom. 13:7). If it is his due, surely the saints will not withhold; in this matter, the saints are excessive, even, some would say, to the point of offense.

While there is no problem with honoring others, we must consider whether John’s charge that the saints are exalting Brother Lee is appropriate. ‘To~exalt someone does not simply mean that we increase our appreciation of that person, but that we also minify the appreciation for all others. The real problem with exalting a man is not in the increase of appreciation for him, for our appreciation for others should always increase; the problem lies in the relative decrease of appreciation for all others. When John says that the saints have exalted Brother Lee above what is written, according to 1 Corinthians 4:6, what he

is really saying, by his use of the term “exalted,” is that others are not being appreciated as much as Brother Lee. Who are the others who are not being properly appreciated? It appears from John’s other charges that he would say that the appreciation of Christ Himself is being neglected in favor of an unhealthy appreciation for Brother Lee. But is that really the case? In the past the saints in the local churches have testified how much Brother Lee’s ministry has led them to Christ, not only in a fuller understanding of Him, but also in a deeper experience of Him. Because of Brother Lee’s ministry, their appreciation of Christ has been greatly increased, and Christ has been exalted above all other persons and all other matters. Are the saints now saying that Christ no longer has this preeminent position in their hearts and that rather Brother Lee is preeminent instead? This is ludicrous! The saints have neither exalted Brother Lee over Christ nor can anyone say that they have. Today the saints will testify that Brother Lee continues to lead them to Christ, both in the understanding of who He is and in the enjoyment of His presence.

Perhaps John will say that Brother Lee has been exalted above other co-workers, that there are other co-workers, perhaps even himself, who are not being appreciated by the saints to the extent that Brother Lee is. But if this is his complaint, he is not properly applying the verse that he calls upon as support, 1 Corinthians 4:6. In this verse, Paul exhorts the saints not to appraise him and Apollos above what has been written, and in the preceding chapters Paul presents a proper view of the ministers of the new testament. They are not the Christ who was crucified for them; they are not the Christ into whom the believers were baptized (1:13). They are not the God who causes the increase (3:5-7). They are rather the servants of that Christ and the stewards of the mysteries of that God (4:1). All their service is judged not before men but before that Christ, before that God (4:2-5). Based upon this presentation of their role in the service of God and of Christ, Paul exhorts the saints not to go beyond this in their estimation of him and Apollos. They are not God; they are not Christ. The thought in this verse is far from what John hopes it would be. Paul is not speaking of exalting men above other men, but rather of exalting him and Apollos above those who have the real value, God and Christ. “Beyond what has been written,” according to 1 Corinthians 4:6, refers to an error the Corinthians were making in exalting many brothers and yet failing to see the worth of God and Christ, who were the real source of their progress in the faith.

And yet even to say that the saints have exalted Brother Lee above others is false, for the saints do not appreciate him at the expense of others. What the saints have not appreciated are brothers who intend to speak things different from what they hear in the ministry. But different speaking is against the teaching of the Word and should not be appreciated. The saints are convinced that what Brother Lee is speaking is according to the truth and they appreciate any and all who speak these things. If some begin to speak differently, most saints turn a deaf ear, and those who speak differently say that their ministry is not appreciated and that Brother Lee’s ministry is. This they call exaltation.

But we call this wisdom, for the saints want to go on in oneness under one trumpet, not in scattered array under the soundings of a confusion of different speakings.

Finally, John says that he appreciates Brother Lee's portion very much. But we wish to turn the question back to him. Does he truthfully appreciate Brother Lee's portion when he does not appreciate him enough to show him the basic respect due another human being? Some months ago, highly slanderous material concerning Brother Lee was being circulated, yet, by his admission in a public meeting, John did nothing about it though he knew of it. He never even protested, but rather sat silently by while he watched the character of someone who cared for him for over a quarter of a century being falsely and maliciously attacked. To have differences in teachings is one thing, but to passively watch, and hence to condone, such a thing is another. It appears that John has no appreciation for Brother Lee as a fellow human being, not to mention as a minister of God's Word.

Further, John wishes to put himself on equal par with Brother Lee in the matter of apostleship in spite of the truth concerning the three types of apostles in the New Testament. But it is obvious to all the saints that if John is indeed an apostle, he is an apostle like Timothy and Titus. He was produced by the labors of Brother Lee and was brought into a function by Brother Lee that was at one time proper. Thus, by claiming a status in the work equal to that of Brother Lee, he either inflates his own status or diminishes the status of Brother Lee. We believe that he does the latter. He wishes to bring Brother Lee's value in the work down to his level. Is this a truthful appreciation of Brother Lee's portion?

CHAPTER TEN

THE ACCUSATION THAT BROTHER WITNESS LEE HAS BECOME A FACTOR OF DIVISION

John points out that "our oneness is not based on any spiritual leader, gifted person, or teaching." We can see no other reason why John would mention this except to imply that Brother Lee and his ministry have become the real basis of oneness among the local churches. Further, he explicitly charges that Brother Lee and his ministry "have been made a great issue and factor of division among us." Thus, on the one hand, he contends that Brother Lee has become the real basis of oneness among us, and this he condemns; and on the other hand, he claims that Brother Lee has become a factor of division among us, and this he also condemns. We question whether Brother Lee and his ministry can at the same moment be both the basis of oneness and a factor of division. It appears that John can find no good in Brother Lee and his ministry; he wishes to insure that all possible ills are assigned to him. We, however, would like to present the facts in a

different light, in the hope that the ills of an improper oneness and of division would be properly assigned.

There was a time in the Lord's recovery when all the brothers and sisters happily followed the light and truth issuing forth from Brother Lee's ministry. John Ingalls, it is safe to say, took the lead to follow this issue, As has been recounted in some detail in chapter 2, in 1984 Brother Lee began to minister in a way that would practically lead the churches out of the stagnation that was setting in. But not all the brothers appreciated this attempt, John Ingalls being among those, as is obvious today. These brothers felt that they should rise up to speak out against what they thought was the beginning of the dissolution of the Lord's recovery. However most of the brothers and sisters did not feel that their speaking out was justified and they would not go along with it. By all appearances, it seemed that there were two factions in many localities, one sympathetic to those who spoke against "the new way," and one desiring to continue, as they had always, under the speaking of Brother Lee's ministry. In this environment, John Ingalls declares that Brother Lee and his ministry have become a factor of division among us.

We believe that the mere telling of the facts in this way speaks for itself and properly identifies the source of division. But we would like to make a few additional points regarding this matter. If there are factions, or parties, among us, it is certainly to our shame, and it is something that all the saints should mourn. But factions are sometimes a necessary ill, according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:18-19: "For first of all, when you come together in the assembly, I hear that there exist divisions among you, and some part I believe. For there must be parties among you, that those who are approved may become manifest among you." When there are different speakings in the church, as there were in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:10), necessarily those who are proper will not enter into the different speaking. In this way, their refusal to follow the speaking of those who think differently will distinguish them. Paul, though certainly not condoning the parties in Corinth (cf. 1 Cor. 11:17), was not surprised by these factions, because he knew that there were some in Corinth who would not follow the folly of fleshy ones. In a sense, Paul could take comfort in the fact that there were parties among the Corinthians, for this indicated that there were some still left in Corinth who had not gone astray. The saints who are "approved" will never enter into the matters that disapprove those who speak differently, even at the cost of being labeled "divisive" by them. Indeed, if there are factions among us, it is a shame, but it would indicate that the healthy teaching is still being held, is still being cherished, by some saints.

This brings us then to the basis of our oneness. John wishes to imply that the saints who support Brother Lee and his ministry are divisive. By this we suppose that he means that such support is a false basis of oneness. He says, "Our oneness is not based on any spiritual leader, gifted person, or teaching." We would agree that our oneness is not based on these, but we wish to also point out that if the saints accept the help of gifted persons

or the teachings of such, that does not necessarily mean that the proper basis of oneness has been abandoned. Our oneness is based on the oneness that exists in the Triune God. It is a oneness that is (1) in the Father's name, referring to the divine life (John 17:6-13); (2) by the holy word of truth (John 17:14-21); and (3) in the divine glory for the eternal expression of the Triune God (John 17:22-24). If the basis of our oneness departs from these divine matters, we are in nothing less than division. If the gifted ones or the teaching of these gifted ones bring the saints further and further into these divine matters, they are promoting the genuine oneness, and hence there is no room for condemning them. The teaching of the early apostles certainly promoted the genuine oneness. To even the casual observer, it seemed that the basis of the oneness in the early church was the teaching of the apostles, and even the inspired record could give this impression (cf. Acts 2:42; 5:42). But actually it was these divine matters - the Father's name, the Father's word, and the Father's glory - that made the believers one. However, there was no concern in the New Testament that because the believers were following Paul, even imitating him (1 Cor. 11:1), Paul had become a factor of division and the believers had abandoned the genuine basis of oneness. There was no problem with following the ministry of Paul closely, because his ministry promoted the genuine oneness based on the Father's name, word, and glory.

Since John feels that Brother Lee and his ministry are a factor of division in the local churches, we assume that he feels that Brother Lee and his ministry have departed from these divine matters and that Brother Lee and his ministry, in supposedly departing from the basis of the genuine oneness, have become a false basis of oneness. We are certain that the majority of the saints do not share this view. We believe that the greater number of saints hold Brother Lee's ministry as that which brings them deeper into the Triune God, who is the genuine basis of our oneness. The saints today then are simply repeating what the ancient saints did relative to Paul and his ministry - following and growing thereby. If John wishes to characterize the acceptance of Brother Lee's ministry as a factor of division, he is certainly free to do so; but we must warn that his characterization must equally be applied to the early saints who followed Paul's ministry, that they must be termed divisive and outside the genuine oneness. We doubt that many saints would be willing to follow John in this type of condemnation, for the saints are more stable and discerning than this.

Hence, we wish to encourage all the saints to continue boldly in their enjoyment of the ministry that has helped them for so many years. We may be labeled "divisive" for doing so by those who disapprove of this ministry, but our conviction concerning the nature of this ministry, that it is bringing us more into the Father's name, the Father's holy word, and the Father's divine glory, assures us that we are beyond reproach before the Lord.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE ACCUSATION CONCERNING “THE QUESTION OF QUESTIONS”

John claims that the question asked of the Pharisees in Matthew 22:42, “What do you think concerning the Christ? Whose Son is He?,” has been changed to “What do you think of Witness Lee? What is your relationship to him?” We believe that this charge shows more clearly than any else that John’s speaking is an exhibition of a careless disregard for both the truth and the actual situation in the Lord’s recovery today. We wish to draw out the implications of his charges and thus make clear how little actual regard he has for the truth and for the Lord’s recovery.

To say that this “question of questions” has been changed among us is quite a serious charge. It is the question of questions because how one answers it determines how one relates to the incarnated God. Christ is not merely the son of David as the Pharisees thought; or else, how is it that David in spirit called Him Lord? But He is not only the Son of God, for Matthew calls Him David’s son (Matt. 1:1). He is the incarnated God, the God-man, and how one relates to Him determines that one’s eternal destiny. God has chosen the way of incarnation to reach fallen mankind, and there is salvation in no other person than the incarnated God (Acts 4:12). Every person must answer this question concerning Him at some point in time. Those who answer rightly, as Peter did in Matthew 16:16, are saved. If this question of questions has been changed among us, as John Ingalls claims, then the object of our believing unto salvation has been changed. If John wishes to make such a claim, either he must be trying to make the more blatant charge that among us we hold that only a proper relationship to Brother Lee merits our salvation or he must be misusing the truth to his advantage. Would he claim that we have abandoned Christ as our Savior and have instead sought our salvation in Witness Lee? If he did, no one would agree. What then? John has misused the truth to his own advantage and has recklessly applied the saving truth concerning the incarnated God to an attack on the saints. We find this despicable.

The saints have not abandoned Christ as John wishes to suggest. We believe that by the thousands the saints in the Lord’s recovery would confess boldly that we are being led more and more into a deeper understanding and experience of Christ. John may wish to charge the saints with attending more to Brother Lee and his ministry than to Christ Himself, but this is merely his delusion. He cannot speak for the saints everywhere as though he were omniscient and the knower of hearts. The fact of the matter is, the saints are being drawn to Christ, not away from Him.

Finally, we would ask, In what way has the question of questions been changed? Do the saints go around in patrols asking, “What do you think of Witness Lee? What is your relationship to him?” Do the churches require a particular answer to such interrogation before a brother or sister is accepted into the fellowship? Or perhaps John would say that there exists a certain offensive attitude in the minds of the saints. No one will agree that such questions are being asked in any open way; there are no “WL patrols” about. Then if the question of questions has been changed only in the minds of some of the saints, it is no question at all; it is only a thought. John’s attack is a straw man, for the saints are not asking this question. And if there is such a thought in the mind of any saint, a matter hard to prove, that cannot condemn the entire recovery, as John attempts to do.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE ACCUSATION CONCERNING DIVISIVENESS AND NARROWNESS

In accusing the local churches and the saints in the churches of divisiveness and narrowness, John’s speaking is extremely presumptuous, even audacious. John’s words here make it particularly evident that he is presenting himself as a spokesman for all the churches. Although his actual knowledge is very limited, he speaks as if he were familiar with the situation of all the churches and all the saints around the globe. Notice the repeated use of we: “We don’t practice it [real oneness] much”; “We have applied this teaching in a divisive and sectarian way”; “We divide ourselves from other Christians”; “We have become very narrow and small”; “We have become so narrow” (italics added). Having accused the churches and the brothers and sisters in the churches of being divisive and narrow, John says, “We should repent of this.” John is quick to inform us of his repentance: “I repent, because I have participated in this myself.” Actually, what John is doing in his speaking here is playing the role of accuser. He cites no evidence; he gives no statistics; he offers no proofs. He simply accuses again and again. The emphasis in his speaking is not on himself and his acknowledged divisiveness and narrowness; the emphasis is on what he perceives to be the divisiveness and narrowness that are allegedly rampant in the local churches and in the lives of the saints throughout the earth.

How should we respond to John’s accusation? We would respond to this accusation in a twofold manner: by pointing out the character of this accusation and by giving the word of our testimony.

In character, the accusation of divisiveness and narrowness is slander. As such, it is a form of defamation. John here is not dealing with particular and exceptional incidences. No, he is making an accusation regarding the general situation, covering all churches and all saints with his blanket statements of accusation. By accusing the churches and the saints of being divisive and narrow, John is defaming them.

In character, John's accusation also has no basis in truth, no grounding in unbiased study of the facts. The real basis of John's accusation is his feeling. "I feel," John informs us, "that in the local churches we have become very narrow and small...." The source of John's speaking here is what he feels. Taking his subjective feeling as his ground, he goes on to say that the general situation among all the saints in all the churches is one of divisiveness, narrowness, improper attitude (see chapter 13), and wrongful application of the truth concerning the ground of the church.

Given the character of this accusation, there is no sound reason whatever for anyone to believe it, for it is slander, a defamation of the saints and the churches. Furthermore, this accusation is not based on the Word of God nor on the Spirit nor on the sense of the Body nor on the fair and unbiased study of the entire picture with adequate supporting evidence; on the contrary, this accusation is based on the subjective feeling of the speaker. Since this accusation has such a character, it is unrighteous and wholly without merit. We therefore repudiate it as utterly contrary to the real situation in the churches and with the saints.

Concerning this real situation, we would like to give a word of testimony (Rev. 12:11). Although we do not claim to have been fully perfected into one (John 17:23) or to have arrived at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God (Eph. 4:13), we can testify in the Lord that the general situation among the churches and of the saints is very different from the distorted picture presented by John. We are absolute for the ground of the oneness of the Body of Christ. Our view, outlook, and reception of the saints encompass the whole Body. We have had countless experiences of meeting and receiving in a spirit of genuine and pure fellowship believers who are involved in all manner of Christian groups. All children of God are welcome at the Lord's table, where, in the peace to which we are called in one Body (Col. 3:15), we partake of the bread and the cup, "discerning the body" (1 Cor. 11:29). Whereas we teach and practice the truth concerning oneness, in particular the oneness of the Body of Christ expressed in local churches established on the proper ground, we do not make the church an issue in our fellowship with other Christians. Our standing is that we receive all whom the Lord has received. We testify before the Lord and before the reader's conscience that this is and has always been not only the teaching but the prevailing practice in the local churches. We honor the oneness of the whole Body, and we also practice the oneness in locality, seeking to observe the biblical twofold-ness of the truth concerning the building of the church universally (Eph. 2:21) as well as locally (v. 22). As we continue to uplift our

practice, we long for the fulfillment of the Lord's desire that we be one not only in the Father's name by eternal life (John 17:6-13) and in the Triune God through sanctification by the holy word (vv. 14-21) but also in the divine glory for the expression of the Triune God (vv. 22-24). This is both the belief and practice of the churches, especially of those who bear responsibility in the churches. Therefore, on the negative side, we repudiate the accusation of divisiveness and narrowness and, on the positive side, we testify that the general situation in the churches is one of standing on the proper ground and receiving all blood-washed, Spirit-regenerated believers in Christ. Just as we were lovingly received when we came into the church life, we also receive with love and with an enlarged heart all our brothers and sisters in the Lord. This is the real situation in the local churches concerning oneness.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE ACCUSATION CONCERNING OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD OTHER CHRISTIANS

In replying to John's accusation concerning our attitude toward other Christians, we need to respond both to his presumption in speaking for all the churches and to his distorted view of the actual general situation in the churches. John is seriously in error in his presumption and also in his view.

As in the previous point, where John accused the local churches and the saints of being narrow, divisive, and sectarian, John is exceedingly presumptuous in making his accusation concerning our attitude toward other Christians. John says, "Our attitude toward other Christians is one of belittling them and thinking we're superior to them." Notice John's use of the word our. His use of this word indicates that, once again, he is assuming the position of being the voice, the spokesman, of all the local churches and all the saints. John simply does not have this position; he does not have any basis for acting as a spokesman for all the churches. In fact, by the time these words were spoken John was no longer a credible spokesman for even the church in Anaheim. John has no right and no standing to speak on behalf of all the churches with all the saints and to give expression to what "our" attitude is toward other Christians. We, therefore, repudiate John's presumption as indicated by his manner of speaking on this point.

Now we need to consider the content of this accusation. John charges the brothers and sisters in the churches of having the attitude of "belittling" other Christians. The word belittle means to disparage, to depreciate, to make small or make appear as small. John is

saying that it is common among us to disparage other Christians, that is, to treat them slightly. He is charging that, in general, our attitude toward believers who do not meet with us is to depreciate them, that is, to represent them as having little value. John is accusing the saints in the local churches of treating other Christians as if they were small and insignificant. If this has been John's attitude, he should repent. However, he has no right to assume that an attitude of belittling other Christians is the general attitude among the saints in the churches. In fact, the prevailing attitude is one of loving, receiving, and appreciating our fellow believers. This surely is the attitude of the overwhelming majority of saints toward the Christians they meet either in meetings or in their daily life. John's accusation regarding the belittling of other Christians is groundless; it is altogether without merit. John's accusation is false.

Concerning the saints' attitude toward other Christians, John actually claims to know what the saints think. This is indicated by the words "thinking we're superior to them." How does John know what others think? What right does he have to say what the saints are thinking? John goes way too far in presuming to know and then to say what other believers think. We are astounded that in his speaking John would overreach to the extent of exercising a presumed ability to read others' minds. Regarding how or what the saints think in relation to other Christians, the saints are well able to speak for themselves. As for us, the writers of this response, we wish to testify that we do not think of ourselves as superior to other Christians. All that we have seen and experienced of Christ and the church and all that we have learned of the truth is of the Lord's mercy. We surely are not better than others. Before God and before the reader's conscience, we bear witness of the fact that we do not view ourselves as superior to other brothers and sisters in Christ. Furthermore, we believe that a thorough and unbiased study of the situation in the local churches throughout the earth will substantiate the claim that the general and prevailing attitude is one of receiving all believers in Christ even as the Lord received us, without narrowness and without prejudice.

John goes on to make an accusation about the supposed use of the expression "poor Christianity." John says, "We say that we're speaking only of the system, not of the people, but our attitude has definitely spilled over to the people." This statement is false. It is false because it is factually untrue. It is false also because John grossly distorts and misrepresents the overall situation. Again, using the words we and our, John presumes to speak on behalf of all the churches with all the saints. John is wrong in his presumption, and he is wrong in his view of the facts. John's accusation is false, and we reject it.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

GOING OUTSIDE THE CAMP

Quoting Hebrews 13:13, John says, “This verse...is very much with me and has been with me for weeks. I desire to do that. I’d like to go out of every camp, especially the camp of myself, and not only go out, but go out unto Him.” John’s use of this verse has many serious implications, some of which we shall now consider.

The first implication involves what John means by camp. Unfortunately, he does not say clearly and frankly what he means; instead, he merely makes a suggestion concerning the present situation in the Lord’s recovery.

Hebrews 13:13 says, “Let us therefore go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.” What is the “camp” out of which John intends to go? It seems to be the camp of “what we call the Lord’s recovery.” John is saying that what we have known as the Lord’s recovery, including the local churches and the ministry which produced the churches, has become a camp, another religious organization or denomination. Having such a perception of the situation among us, John feels that he must go forth outside the camp and, presumably, be in the “real” recovery. Since in his view what is called the Lord’s recovery is no longer the real recovery of the Lord but a camp, John can justify himself in leaving it, should he choose to do so. His opinion is similar to that of the ones who left the church life in 1978, claiming that the church in Anaheim was no longer a genuine local church. Will John, as long as he lives in Anaheim, continue to meet with the church in Anaheim? Instead of meeting with the church, will John, claiming that what is called the church in Anaheim is no longer a genuine local church, begin or join another kind of Christian meeting? Will that meeting include the breaking of bread? Unless John’s future words and actions indicate otherwise, we must conclude that by going outside the camp John intends to go outside what is called the Lord’s recovery and to practice a kind of church life which is in keeping with his perceptions and views.

Second, John implies that what is called the Lord’s recovery is not only a camp but also a fold out of which the Lord is calling His sheep. John says, “The Lord is still calling His sheep out of the fold, so there could be one flock with one shepherd.” What is this “fold”? For John, it apparently is the church life in what is called the Lord’s recovery. John is further saying that this fold is keeping us - the Lord’s sheep - from the one flock, which is the real church life. According to John’s perception, the fold is also keeping us from the one Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Himself. Thus John is actually saying that our present church life is a fold that is keeping us from the Shepherd and the flock, that is, from Christ and the church. This is the clear implication of John’s words. John is saying

that we are all in a fold and that this fold is keeping us from Christ and the real church life.

Third, John is saying that since the Lord Jesus is outside the camp (as well as outside the fold), we need to go forth unto Him. "I'm afraid we may go out," John tells us, "but not go unto Him. Then that's meaningless...May the Lord bring us to Himself, outside of every fold, every camp." In John's view, the Lord Himself has left what is called the Lord's recovery and is therefore no longer present in the church life as we know it, just as He was no longer to be found in Judaism when the Epistle to the Hebrews was written. This is the import of the words "May the Lord bring us to Himself." John is saying that we are apart from the Lord and He from us, and that we need to be brought to the Lord outside the camp, the fold, of the recovery. John is actually urging us to leave the present church life, which according to his perception is a camp, and go forth unto the Lord, who supposedly is no longer to be found in what is called the Lord's recovery.

Fourth, John seems to be implying that, as one who is going outside the camp, he is a pattern for others to follow. He says, "I desire to do that. I'd like to go outside of every camp...." These words can reasonably be understood as indicating that John is presenting himself as a "spiritual" example. We sincerely hope that John does not really view himself as such a pattern or example. We cannot take him as an example of following the Lord and His move in the Body. We regret to say that in this matter of the camp neither John's view nor his example is normative.

Fifth, John uses Hebrews 13:13 to lend credence to his views, thus adding to his opinions and feelings an aura of spirituality and biblical verifiability. Hebrews 13:13 may have been "with" John for weeks, but we cannot subscribe to his way of applying this verse to the churches and to the saints in the churches. The fact that this verse has been with John does not prove any of his points. Scriptures can be quoted to justify any number of mistaken views. We would, therefore, caution the reader of the transcript not to be easily swayed by John's use of Hebrews 13:13. A distorted view - and John's view of the present situation among us certainly is distorted - does not become true and trustworthy simply because it is adorned with biblical terminology or spiritual phraseology.

In our judgment, John has misused and misapplied Hebrews 13:13. His claims are based neither on the Word of God nor on an accurate knowledge and proper assessment of the actual situation in the Lord's recovery today. Therefore, we unreservedly reject all that is implied in John's word about going forth outside the camp. We reject his claim that the Lord's recovery is a camp or a fold, and we also reject his suggestion that the Lord Jesus is no longer with the local churches or with Brother Lee in his ministry.

There may be something sadly ironic about John's appeal to and use of Hebrews 13:13. According to his view, what we call the Lord's recovery has become a camp, and John

seems to feel led to leave it in order to go forth unto the Lord. Actually, the real situation may be that John is leaving the present recovery of the Lord with His up-to-date speaking and move and is going forth, or going back, to a camp, perhaps a camp resembling that of the open Brethren.

We fully agree with the Lord's word in Hebrews 13:13. We earnestly desire to come out of every camp and to be one with the Lord in the church life. To be in a camp is to linger in what the Lord did in the past and not to participate in what He is doing now. For example, one's memory, or idealized recollection, of the church life in Elden hall may hinder one from being in the Lord's present recovery. The Lord is going on in His recovery, and we want to go on with Him, receiving His up-to-date speaking and participating fully in His up-to-date move.

We admit that with the old way of meeting and serving there was the tendency to form a camp. This is the very thing from which the Lord has been seeking to deliver us, and we bear witness to the fact that He is doing it. In this matter Brother Lee's recent ministry has been crucial. We can testify that the more we receive this ministry and apply it properly in the Body, the more we are brought out of the camp of tradition, oldness, and organization and the more we are brought into the reality and practicality of the Body, with the members being perfected by the gifts to function organically so that the Body may build itself up in love. We are happy to be one with the Lord and with our Brother Lee to follow the God-ordained way to practice His New Testament economy and thus to come out of every camp to enjoy Christ, to experience Christ, and to live in the organic union with Christ that the Body may be built up and the bride prepared for the Lord's coming back.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE SCOPE OF OUR ONENESS

John here speaks two sentences related to the scope of our oneness. "Our oneness should be as large as the whole Body of Christ. Any oneness that is smaller than this, we should leave, we should not keep." It appears that these statements are a pure and simple affirmation of the truth. Actually, John is once again accusing the churches in the Lord's recovery and the saints in the churches of not keeping the proper oneness, the oneness of the Body of Christ. This becomes evident if we remember that John has already accused us of not practicing real oneness (see chapter 12), of belittling other Christians (see chapter 13), and of being a camp (see chapter 14). By asserting that our oneness should be as large as the whole Body of Christ John is actually saying that our oneness is not as

large as the whole Body; he is in fact accusing us of practicing a oneness that is narrow, exclusionary, and sectarian, a oneness that “we should leave, we should not keep.”

We reject John’s accusation that our oneness is lesser in scope than the whole Body of Christ. The local churches, being local expressions of the one, unique, universal Body of Christ, are established on the ground of the oneness of the Body of Christ. John knows this all too well. In his preface to Brother Lee’s book *The Genuine Ground of Oneness*, John says, “We worship the Lord that in His present move on the earth He has brought to His people the revelation concerning the genuine ground of oneness.” John goes on to say, “His recovery of the church life in this country began with this revelation and has grown and spread with churches under the Lord’s commanded blessing just because of this God-ordained unique ground. We thank the Lord that by His mercy this vision with this practice has never been dropped, though it has been severely attacked.”

By standing on the genuine ground of oneness we renounce all narrow, exclusionary, and sectarian oneness. By taking such a stand we also testify that our oneness is the unique oneness of the Body of Christ. In keeping with this standing, we receive all blood-washed, Spirit-regenerated believers in Christ — all those who have the common faith (Titus 1:4; 2 Pet. 1:1) and the common salvation (Jude 3). All whom the Lord has received we also receive and welcome to all church meetings and especially to the Lord’s table.

It is regrettable that John no longer believes that this is our standing and practice. It is sad that John has come to feel that our oneness in the Lord’s recovery is something less than the oneness of the whole Body of Christ. John’s view, however, is far from the truth and fails to conform to the facts. Before God, man, and Satan we testify that our oneness is nothing less, and also nothing more, than the oneness of the whole Body of Christ.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE SCOPE OF AUTONOMY IN A LOCAL CHURCH

John also makes a point of the autonomous administration of a local church. However he does not say that there has been an infringement of any sort; instead he merely reads from *Beliefs and Practices of the Local Church* concerning this matter. Since no actual charge is made, we can hardly answer. We suspect that John is trusting that the saints understand clearly why he brings up this matter, but in actuality there is no way to tell whether John thinks that every church is deviant in its administration or that only the church in Anaheim has deviated or that there is a “tendency” in this direction or that we should all be warned or something else. We will not attempt to second-guess John, for

there is really no telling what he is trying to do with this. Instead, we wish to present what we feel is a proper view of “autonomy.”

First, we should recognize that the church, above all else, is the Body of Christ. It is not merely a group of called-out saints as the Greek word *ekklesia* would indicate. Paul labored abundantly to uplift the view of the *ekklesia* from that of a mere group of gathered believers to that of the very Body of Christ. We are His flesh and bones on the earth today (Eph. 5:30-32; cf. Gen. 2:21-25). Paul’s revelation of the church as the Body of Christ was a new thing, not merely new among the Jews, but new among mankind. Never before had such a thing happened in human history; never had men been brought together in an organic union with God to become an organic entity. Previously, men could only be organized together; now men could be organically related to one another and to God Himself in the Body of Christ. Because of this, all notions of how men relate to each other became inoperative. In this respect, terms like “autonomous” are out of place, for autonomy does not exist in the organic realm. To insist upon the autonomy of a local church is to remove the church from her unique status of the organic Body of Christ. It devaluates her worth to that of a mere human organization.

Second, the autonomy that John insists upon and supports by his reading of Beliefs and Practices of the Local Church is an autonomy in administrative matters only; it is not an all-pervasive autonomy that includes every aspect of a local church’s existence. While the church is indeed His Body, it is at the same time the gathering of a group of people who live in a world where times and places are fundamental. A gathering requires consent by all the gathered ones as to when and where they will gather. Determining when and where the people want to gather requires an administration; executing the consent of those who will gather requires an administration; serving the needs of the gathering of the saints requires an administration; and so on. And this administration is, by God’s design, local and autonomous. The saints in a locality may need to meet in the early morning because they all work until late at night. There should be an administration in the church there that determines this need and provides for it by arranging for a meeting place and communicating the arrangements to all. It would be preposterous and insensitive to have a universal or even regional administration of these kinds of matters, for only the saints in any given locality can determine what the actual need is in such matters.

But local administration is not all-pervasive. It merely facilitates the practical needs associated with the church’s true nature as the Body of Christ. A body cannot be administrated. Where the practical administration of a local church ends, there the autonomy ends as well. Autonomy does not operate in the spiritual realm of the Body of Christ, in the organic realm of the functioning of its members, or in the divine realm of the supply ministered by the gifts. It is inappropriate in the Body of Christ even to speak of autonomy. Rather, in the Body there are members and joints of supply functioning in

an organic harmony that issues in the building up of the Body. We must always be careful not to lose the precious status that the church has as the only corporate organic entity in the universe. Talk of autonomy is offensive to this treasured status, because it is organizational talk that allows a kind of separateness that would kill the Body. The flow of life that is in the Body of Christ is life for all the Body; membership in the Body is membership in all the Body; functioning in the Body is functioning for all the Body. There is no autonomous life supply, there are no autonomous members, and there is no autonomous function; there is just one Body and there are just members one of another. Bluntly then, the local churches, as the Body of Christ, are not autonomous; though as groups of local saints requiring practical administration, they are. To bring autonomy outside of its very narrow realm of practical administration is to destroy the local churches as the expression of the Body of Christ; it is to deform them into mere human groups scattered about the earth, stripped of their unique status as the corporate organic expression of Christ; it is to undo the masterpiece of the Triune God, produced in the great labor of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and descension as the all-inclusive Spirit.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE ACCUSATION THAT THERE IS AN OVER-STRESSING AND A DISTORTION OF THE TEACHING CONCERNING DEPUTY AUTHORITY

According to John's perception, "to some extent an atmosphere of fear" has "been brought in among the saints and among the churches." John alleges that this atmosphere brings "the conscience of the saints into bondage." John believes that "this has been done by an over-stressing and distortion of the teaching concerning deputy authority." John concludes that this has made the saints "fearful to follow their conscience, to be one with their spirit, and sometimes to speak their genuine concerns." Once again, John's accusation is vague, groundless, and without evidence. It is based on subjective feelings, not on comprehensive and unbiased study, and there is no reason for it to be accepted by anyone.

We will focus our response on the basic element of this accusation - the assertion that the teaching concerning deputy authority has been over-stressed and distorted. For John to make this claim implies that he knows what is the properly stressed and undistorted

teaching regarding deputy authority. Otherwise, how could he discern over-stressing and distortion? Therefore, we would ask John to present a clear definition of the undistorted biblical teaching concerning deputy authority. We would further request that he explain the proper stress that should be placed on this teaching, a stress that is neither excessive nor insufficient. In addition, we would ask that in his definition and explanation John reply to a number of matters which we will now proceed to bring up.

As printed in a transcript of what is called “edited testimonies” from a meeting held in Anaheim on August 28, 1988, a brother said: “I tell you, among us this matter of spiritual authority is a big, big superstition....This is a devilish superstition.” Such a statement, made openly in a church meeting and then circulated in print, is reckless and irresponsible; it is also a sign that the speaker does not know what spiritual authority is. Does John agree with this brother’s view of spiritual authority? If John also believes that the matter of spiritual authority is a “big superstition,” even a “devilish superstition,” we would inquire as to how such an extreme view can be justified according to the Scriptures. If John does not agree with this brother’s opinion, we would ask him to give his reasons for considering it erroneous.

Another concept of spiritual, or deputy, authority has been enunciated by certain saints in Anaheim. According to their concept, in the New Testament there is no deputy authority at all. They allege that Old Testament illustrations of deputy authority and of rebellion against God and His deputy authority do not apply to us today, even though these cases are regarded by Paul as types of us (1 Cor. 10:6, 11). These saints strongly assert that deputy authority is strictly an Old Testament matter and thus has no place in the Christian life, the church life, or the New Testament ministry. How does John feel about this teaching concerning spiritual authority? It is biblical? Is it truthful?

We also would ask about John’s present judgment of Brother Watchman Nee’s book *Authority and Submission* (previously published under the title *Spiritual Authority*). We are concerned that he may not agree with Brother Nee’s teaching on spiritual authority and deputy authority. How does John assess this book as a whole? Does he agree with its teaching? With its emphasis? Since John has made an issue of deputy authority, we ask that he declare his views about the following excerpts from *Authority and Submission* (our numbering):

1. Nothing is greater than authority in the universe; nothing can surpass it. For this reason, if we want to serve God, we must know God’s authority (p. 7).
2. The possibility exists in God’s work that in principle we may stand on Satan’s side, while in doctrine we stand on Christ’s side. All the while we may think that we are still doing the Lord’s work. This is a very evil thing. Satan is not afraid of our preaching the words of Christ. He is only afraid of our submitting under the authority of Christ (p. 8).

3. ...anyone who has met authority will deal with authority alone; he will not deal with the person involved. We should think only of the authority and not of the person, for our submission is not to that person but to God's authority in that person. If this is not our attitude, we do not know what authority is. If we deal with the person first, before we submit to authority, we are completely wrong. If we touch the matter of authority first, then submit ourselves to that person, irrespective of who he is, we are on the right path (p. 9).
4. The greatest demand God has on man is not the bearing of the cross, offerings, consecration, or self sacrifice. God's greatest demand on man is submission (p. 10).
5. Obedience is the other end of authority. In order to have obedience, one must keep the self out of the picture. One must not try to obey with the self. Only by living in the spirit is there the possibility of obedience. Obedience is the highest expression of response to God's will (p. 10).
6. We who are involved in the Lord's work are the servants of God. As such, the first thing we touch is the matter of authority. Touching authority is as real a matter as touching salvation. For us this is a deeper lesson. We must be touched and smitten at least once by authority. Only then can we work the work of God (p. 12).
7. Hence, there are two principles in the universe: one of God's authority and the other of Satan's rebellion. We cannot serve God on the one hand, while taking the way of rebellion with a spirit of rebellion on the other. Although a rebellious one can preach, Satan will laugh at that, because in that preaching there is the principle of Satan (p. 13).
8. If the matter of authority is not solved, nothing can be done well. Faith is the principle whereby we receive life, while submission is the principle whereby we conduct our living. All of the divisions and denominations of the church today have come from rebellion (p. 19).
9. Many think that they have submitted themselves to God already. They do not know that they still need to submit to God's deputy authority (pp. 28-29).
10. God cannot be separated from His deputy authority. One cannot take one attitude towards God and a different attitude towards Moses and Aaron. No one can reject God's deputy authority with one hand while receiving God with the other (p. 30).
11. Therefore, one must meet authority, be restricted by God, and then be led by His deputy authority (p. 32).
12. Today if a man is to serve God, he must submit to authority. Submission is higher than our work (p. 36).
13. God's purpose is not only for us to become the church, but also for the church to become the kingdom of God. She is to be the sphere of God's

kingdom, the place where God is to execute His authority. Hence, God's desire is not only to gain ground in a few, but to have the whole church free from rebellion.

14. God has called us not only to receive life through faith, but also to maintain His authority through obedience. God's plan for us in the church is for us to submit to His authority as well as to all authorities He establishes (p. 49).

15. For one to submit to God's direct authority there is no need of humility. But for one to submit to the deputy authority there must be humility and brokenness. Only by laying the flesh aside completely can one accept and obey the deputy authority (p. 63).

16. The oneness and power of the church are broken through man's careless words. Today in the church the majority of the problems come from evil speakings....If evil words are stopped in the church, the majority of our problems will be reduced....Evil speaking needs a thorough termination in the church....May evil speaking depart from among us starting today (p. 82).

17. To discern if a man has met authority or not, we need to see if such a one has been dealt with in speaking, in reasons, and in opinions. Once a man has confronted authority, the tongue will not be that careless, the reasonings will not be that bold, and deeper still, the opinions will not be exercised (p. 91).

18. Once a person meets God's authority, he will soften up, wither down, and be weakened. This is because he has become fearful of making mistakes; he is truly a soft person (p. 99).

19. Those that have met authority will have their mouths shut. They will be restricted. They will not dare to speak carelessly, for they have the consciousness of authority with them (p. 99).

20. If a man has met authority, any transgression in others will be detected by him immediately. He will see through many lawless-nesses, and will realize many rebellions. He will then come to know that the principle of lawlessness abounds everywhere, in the world as well as in the church. Only those who have met authority can lead others to learn submission. Only when the brothers and sisters are submissive to authority will the church have a testimony and a way on earth (pp. 99-100).

We invite John to consider all these statements and then to make it unequivocally clear if he thinks Brother Nee's teaching is accurate and has the proper emphasis. If John feels that this teaching itself is right but that in general it has been overstressed and distorted among us, we would ask him to prove the truth of his allegation. For our part, we reject as false and unmerited John's accusation that the general situation among the churches in the Lord's recovery is that the teaching concerning spiritual authority has been overstressed and distorted.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE ACCUSATION CONCERNING METHODS AND SUCCESS

John says, “There has been too much emphasizing of methods more than the inner anointing, and external big success more than the experience of the inner life. This surely is a deviation from the central lane of God’s economy.” Here we see that John again levels a vague, unsupported accusation against the recovery as a whole. It simply is not true that the general situation in the churches and among the saints is one of stressing methods and success at the expense of the genuine inner anointing or of the real experience of the inner life. Many churches and saints have been awakened by the Lord to realize their barrenness in the matter of the Lord’s increase and seek to have a prevailing practice of gospel preaching as an integral part of their church life. With these churches and saints there is not “too much emphasizing of methods,” but there is the willingness to receive training in order to uplift their preaching of the gospel. They can testify that this training and their exercise in the gospel have definitely enriched their experience of Christ as life and have fostered the genuine enjoyment of the Lord and the real growth in life. Moreover, the goal here is not what John calls “external big success”; the goal is the bearing of fruit, according to the Lord’s word in John 15.

It is a fact that John has accused Brother Lee of changing both in his nature and in his way. It is likely, therefore, that John’s charge about emphasizing methods and success instead of life is aimed at Brother Lee. The truth is that Brother Lee has never turned from the proper emphasis on life. On the contrary, the practice of the new way is altogether dependent on the normal experience of life. Consider what Brother Lee says in *The Present Advance of the Lord’s Recovery*, a book composed of messages given in San Diego in January 1989 (pp. 28-30):

For the Lord’s present recovery we need to live an overcoming life daily. Some have said that the new way to preach the gospel by knocking on doors is just a method, but I am not teaching the saints a set of methods. To take the new way, we need another life. The new way is a matter of life, not a matter of method....This kind of life will not allow us to be slothful with the Lord, to be idle in spiritual things. Such a life will save us from many abnormal things, and we will be altogether normal in every way and in every respect.

If we are not revived persons, it is difficult to go out to save sinners by contacting them where they are. We should not touch the saints first concerning preaching the gospel. We have to touch them first concerning having a revived life. We need to help the saints to be revived. We do not need to preach or promote door-knocking in our locality. That is the wrong way. We have to do something to minister Christ to the saints that they may be revived. Then they will begin to live an overcoming life to such an extent that we may not need to tell them to go visit people in their homes with the gospel. They will do it spontaneously because they will have a desire to preach Christ to others. Their motive for preaching the gospel will not be our teaching but it will be Christ abiding in them. Christ abiding in them will be the motive for them to get sinners saved, to have home meetings, and to have group meetings. We need such a revived life for the Lord's present recovery.

Concerning life and anointing, we can only wonder what the real situation is with those who are barren in or indifferent toward the going forth to bear much fruit for the glorification of the Father (John 15:16, 8). The inner life and the inner anointing must have a practical issue, and this issue definitely includes fruitful activity in the preaching of the gospel.

It seems to us that underlying John's accusation concerning methods and success there is a dispositional bias—the bias that causes one to be inclined toward “spirituality” and to the “inner anointing” and the “inner life” in such a way as to be unbalanced with respect to training, practicality, labor in needful activity, and the divine commission to preach the gospel in order to have a genuine and proper numerical increase.

We need both life and training. Certain “spiritual” groups stress the inner life but are opposed to any kind of training. This is one extreme. Certain religious institutions stress professional training but have little or no regard for the inner life. This is another extreme. We should reject both extremes and take the proper, balanced way—the way of life and training.

Concerning the balance between life and training Brother Lee has been and still is clear in vision and faithful in practice. Consider the following from the Life-study of Ephesians, Message Forty-one (pp. 351-352):

The practice of today's Christianity is not the Lord's way according to the New Testament. In Christianity seminaries are established to train people to serve the Lord. But those educated in the seminaries are not perfected according to God's New Testament economy. The genuine perfection of the saints must be in the church and under the ministry....In these days I bear a heavy burden concerning the perfecting of the saints, This burden cannot be discharged until I see that all the saints are able to do the same kind of work as was done by the early apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. I do not care merely to be a

preacher or a teacher of the Bible. I desire to be perfected and to perfect others unto the building up of the Body of Christ.

In this message Brother Lee goes on to say that being perfected involves life, which requires growth, and function, which requires training (pp. 352-353):

In order to be perfected, we must pay attention to life and to function. The way to be perfected is to grow in life and to become skillful in function....Mothers perfect their children by feeding them. Furthermore, parents equip their children and furnish them by training them to behave and to speak in a certain way. Thus, children are perfected by feeding and by training. The same is true with respect to perfecting the saints according to God's economy. The saints need to be fed and they need to be trained so that they may function with the proper skill.

Once when I was visiting a certain place which was regarded as being rather spiritual, I was asked why we conduct trainings in the Lord's recovery. I replied that as human beings we need to grow and we also need to learn. If we do not grow, we shall not have the stature required to do certain things. If we do not learn, we shall be "barbarians."...Do not think that as long as a person is spiritual in life, he requires no training. No, in spiritual things, as in physical things, there is the need of training. In spiritual things we need the maturity, the growth in life, and we also need the skill. The maturity comes from life, and the skill comes from training. Therefore, in order to perfect the saints, we need to feed them with spiritual food that they may grow, and we also need to train them to develop certain skills...To be trained is to have the rich supply of Christ ministered to us that we may grow, and it is to be equipped that we may be skillful in speaking, in contacting new ones, in shepherding, and in preaching and teaching.

The genuine experience of life and of the inner anointing should also be balanced by practicality. To care for life and anointing but not for practicality is to be unbalanced, and to care for practicality but not for life and anointing is also to be unbalanced. Depending on one's natural inclination, some saints unduly stress life and anointing and others emphasize practicality. The normal, balanced way is life with practicality; it is practicality in life, with life, and by life.

Please consider Brother Lee's testimony on behalf of Brother Nee (Foreword to *The Orthodoxy of the Church*, p. 5):

I have never met a servant of the Lord so balanced as Brother Watchman Nee. He is rich in life, and he is also rich in knowledge. He knows and loves the Lord, and he knows and loves the Bible too. He knows Christ, and he also knows the church. He is for Christ, and he is also for the church. Thus, his ministry has been always balanced with two sides—the spiritual and the practical.

We would give the same testimony on behalf of Brother Lee's life and ministry. With him also there is the balance between the spiritual and the practical. We regret to say that in John's speaking such a balance is noticeably absent.

In the Christian life and in the church life, as well as in the New Testament ministry, there is the balance between life and labor in needful activity. This balance is exemplified in the parables of the virgins and of the talents in Matthew 25, with the former emphasizing life and the latter emphasizing labor. “Spiritual” people may talk much about life and anointing but disparage labor in and for the Lord as mere religious activity. If one does not learn to labor for God’s interests, the normalcy of his “inner life” may be subject to question. The Apostle Paul was surely rich in life, but he labored abundantly (1 Cor. 15:10; Col. 11:28-29). We also should be rich in life and diligent in labor. Of course, we should also avoid the extreme of laboring in ourselves and in our natural life and ability instead of in the grace of God. We need to work by the overflow of life. “The over-flow of life is work,/ The work should be our living” (Hymns # 910). Yes, we need the inner life, but this life needs to overflow as work. To have a life that is merely “inner” but that does not overflow as work and in work is to be unbalanced and perhaps subject to a dispositional bias in favor of spirituality at the expense of labor in needful activity.

Finally, this dispositional bias may incline one to the inner life at the expense of obeying the divine commission to go forth and preach the gospel so that the Lord may have in the churches the genuine and proper numerical increase. The Lord must increase (John 3:29), and the book of Acts illustrates the Lord’s concern for His increase. There must be an increase of believers so that the Lord may have a building, an expression, that is worthy of Him as the rich, unlimited, inexhaustible One. However, a dispositional bias that favors “spirituality” and that depreciates training, practicality, and labor may frustrate the gaining of the needed increase. This increase can be frustrated in particular by the disposition of the leading ones in the church.

In *The Practical Expression of the Church* (pp. 179-181) Brother Lee speaks about the dispositional hindrance to the Lord’s increase:

The increase and fruit-bearing of the church can be greatly frustrated and limited by the disposition of the leading ones in the churches. Some leading brothers possess a natural disposition against having many people....They like to be the leader of a small group, not a large one. If the number is large, they feel they cannot handle it. This is why our natural disposition must be broken....Our disposition must be transformed. We must bear fruit. In some of the places I have visited, I have cried silently to the Lord, “Lord, be merciful to this place. They have been here five years, and there is still no increase.” This simply has been due to the disposition of the leading ones. They did not like to have so many. They were satisfied with just a moderate number. The Lord be merciful to us that we may never have such a disposition.

Some of the leading ones do not like to be so busy in taking care of new ones. That is their disposition. And this kind of disposition restricts the increase of the church....The leading ones of all the churches must be enlarged in their disposition. It is true that to have more people is a kind of trouble, but we must

be enlarged. And the leaders must learn to share responsibility with others. But again, this is a matter of disposition. Some of the leading ones do not like to have others share the responsibility; they like to have everything in their hands. This has to be broken if the church is to increase.

We reject John's accusation concerning methods, success, the inner life, and the inner anointing. The picture of the Lord's recovery portrayed by his words is distorted, and the dispositional proclivity that underlies his words is biased. Our desire is to avoid all extremes and to be balanced regarding life, training, practicality, labor, and increase. We long to enjoy the Christ by whom "are life and numbers multiplied" (Hymns, # 863).

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE NEW WAY

John's eighteenth point is simply this: "The so-called new way is not our problem." Then he goes on to give a brief synopsis of what he perceives the new way to be:

The matters of preaching the Gospel, having home meetings, practicing mutuality in our meetings with everyone sharing are scriptural. We have no problem with these things, and we like to practice them. Indeed we have practiced them. Actually, these things are not new. Of course, our practicing of them might be new.

No one could say that John's synopsis is incorrect. As it is stated above, who could have a problem with "the so-called new way"? But we maintain that the new way is not merely according to this synopsis and that a lack of understanding of what the new way is in a full way is a big part of the "problem." On this final point, we wish to present our observations concerning the new way and how it has been misapprehended by some to the detriment of all.

John's view of the new way is a view of practices alone. It is not a view on the divine realities that underpin and substantiate these practices. But all practices in God's New Testament economy must and do have a basis in the divine reality. The healthy practices of the Christian life serve to anchor our experience firmly, for practices are the outward manifestations in our physical world of the inner realities of our spiritual life. If we have only the spiritual reality without the proper corresponding practice, we risk the loss of that reality. On the other hand, if we have the practices only without the proper apprehension of the spiritual reality, we risk degenerating into ritual void of content. Thus, in God's New Testament economy there are these two matters: the spiritual reality

and the external practice. Our Christian life is a life that is constantly involved with these two things. According to the Bible, we should not simply believe; we should also call on Him with our mouth (Rom. 10:9-10). We should not simply accept the fact that we have been terminated and transferred from Adam into Christ; we should also be baptized in water (Rom. 6:3). We should not simply enjoy Christ daily as our feast; we should also gather around a table to declare that enjoyment and to remember what the Lord had to go through to make it available to us (1 Cor. 11:23-26). We are under Christ our Head in reality, but it is the privilege of the sisters to outwardly display the submission of all the members to Christ by the covering on their heads (1 Cor. 11:1-16). In all these matters and in many more, the practices make the spiritual realities practical.

The new way is not merely a set of new practices. It is a fresh vision of the divine reality as well as particular, practical ways to assure the apprehension of that vision. We regret that some brothers have so quickly reacted to “the so-called new way” and have long ago ceased to follow closely the developments in the Lord’s recovery. The fact that to them the new way is only “so-called” indicates that they have not seen anything that is genuinely a new vision and genuinely a new practice to insure that vision. We suggest that had they been quiet all these months, had they not been traversing the earth to undermine the saints, had they simply listened and considered until today, they would have come to see a new view and a new way. Instead, they are complaining against things that are not things at all and are saying that the practices that first roused them into their present actions are not their problem. We regret that they have missed what has finally issued from the years of development and are now left holding nebulous complaints against the saints and a nebulous and superficial view of the new way.

The new way is not merely the preaching of the gospel. We have had gospel preaching among us from the very first days. But we have never had such a clear view of the gospel as we have today. Now we see that the gospel is not merely a tool in the hand of a gospel preacher, but the true realm of our priesthood in the New Testament age. Paul considered himself a priest of the gospel and he did the work of this kind of priest (Rom. 15:16). Paul did not have in his understanding of the gospel 2000 years of church history; he was not influenced by previous movements and great preachers; his notion of the gospel was not the notion of Christianity’s. Paul had instead the background of the Old Testament as recorded, not in history books, but in the inspired writings of Moses and the prophets. In those writings he could see God’s original intention that all His people would be priests offering up sacrifices acceptable to God. Paul saw and worked under the vision that in the New Testament age that original intention was to be fulfilled and every saint, every believer, was to be and was to work as a priest. But more importantly, Paul identified the gospel as the realm of the New Testament priesthood. What the priests in the Old Testament did was a type of what Paul and the New Testament believers were to do in the gospel. Peter too had this realization, for he describes the royal priesthood as that which

tells out the virtues of Him that has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9). No doubt, the telling out is the gospel.

Paul's ministry was a struggling to present sacrifices of both unbelievers and believers to God. In Romans 15:16 he speaks of the initial offering of the Gentiles as sacrifices. In Romans 12:1 he speaks of the believers presenting themselves as a living sacrifice to God. In Colossians 1:28 he characterizes his ministry as an announcing, as all the gospel is, in warning and teaching so that he might present every man full-grown in Christ. His struggle was governed by the vision of a priest of the gospel presenting sacrifices to God. Under this vision he labored constantly, traveling throughout his world, suffering a multitude of afflictions, speaking, writing, reasoning—all to present every man full-grown as a gift to God according to the inspired type of the priest in the Old Testament. He was the unique pattern for the reality of the priesthood in the gospel.

But not only is the vision of the gospel new, our way in the gospel also is new. It is new not because it has never been done before, but because it is not the old way that Christianity has heretofore taken. The essence of this new way is rooted in God's basic way to deal with man—by visiting him. In Christ God visited man with salvation (Lk. 1:68). The incarnation is His knocking on our doors. And in His earthly ministry, the Lord took the way of visiting people with salvation (e.g., Lk. 19:5-10; Jn. 4:4-28). Later, the Holy Spirit set two brothers apart for visiting the Gentiles with God's salvation (Acts 13:2-4). Everywhere we see the ancient, divine principle of the gospel: visiting people where they are with God's full salvation.

Further, the new way is not merely having home meetings and practicing mutuality in our meetings with everyone sharing. The new way is the practical way to overthrow the degradation of clergy-laity and restore the functioning of all the members so that the Body of Christ may be built up genuinely. We have always known that God's goal in this age is to build up the church, but we have never had a clear understanding of how that building is to take place. We believe that the Lord has given us a fresh vision, albeit the ancient vision, of how to build the church. The church must be built by all the members directly (Eph. 4:16) and the building must be by the increase of God in all the members (Col. 2:19). The church is His Body, so building in this organic entity must be by the increase of Himself in all the members and by all the members. When we put together these two constraints given to us in His holy Word, we see that the church is to be built by all the members themselves ministering Christ into one another and causing God to increase in one another. This is the function of all the members.

Yet the members do not spontaneously come into this function after their regeneration. Though there is the capacity and ability to function in this way, there is the need for what Paul calls the perfecting unto this work of ministry so that the building up of the Body could take place (Eph. 4:12). Again, new light has been shed on this matter as well. We now know that the proper organic functioning of the members is something that is

perfected by the gifts, who were given to the Body by the Christ who fills all things (Eph. 4:8-12). Every saint who is honest before the Lord will admit that he or she is short of this perfecting work and thus his or her functioning is not fully adequate for the task of building the church. All these years we have enjoyed Christ to some extent, but we all feel short. We believe that this is a genuine registration within that can only be answered by the genuine perfecting that Paul speaks of. We need the gifts given by the Lord to come to us and increase our capacity in life and function. We need to be brought into function in the proper way that the gifted ones function, into the work of ministering the all-inclusive Christ into others.

And we now know, to some extent, how the gifted ones should function to perfect the saints. Again, we have Paul as a pattern. In Acts 20 he declared his way as a gift to the elders of the church in Ephesus and placed his way before them as a pattern for their emulation. All the time that he had been in Asia he took the way of perfecting the saints both publicly and from house to house. He had been among those saints in tears, indicating that he had come to know the situations of the saints to an intimacy of moved compassions. This no doubt occurred in their homes. Some may deride this way as trivial and ineffective, choosing instead the way of public meetings attended by the thousands. But in doing so, they doubly inflict harm on the Body, for without the house-to-house perfecting there are no tears that indicate the effectual laboring on the saints, and with the public meetings alone there is no way for the many members to function. Our need today is not great speakers and large meetings; our need today are gifts coming to the homes of the saints to care for them in the way of perfecting them into their organic function.

Finally, the new way is not merely a practicing of mutuality in our meetings, but a fresh vision concerning God's working to accomplish His goal and a fresh practice to assure the apprehension of that vision. God works by speaking. One need only consider God's ways with mankind to see this principle. From the eternal view, Christ, the Second of the Trinity, is the Word of God, and through this Word God created all things. God accomplished all His work with the children of Israel by His speaking to them. The writer of Hebrews views the two ages of God's work in time, the old dispensation and the new dispensation, as God's speaking: during the former, in the prophets; during the latter, in the Son. Based upon this, we can be assured that God will accomplish His goal for this age through His divine speaking. But now we know that in building the church He will not speak directly as He did in creating the heavens and the earth; but rather His divine speaking will be the speaking of the members one to another. Their speaking will build the church because it is His speaking. This is why Paul says, "He who prophesies builds up the church" (1 Cor. 14:4). Thus, our mutuality in the meetings is no mere practice. It is the outworking of the incarnated, divine speaking of God to accomplish His goal, the building up of the church. To those who see it, it is no trivial matter. To those who see it, it governs and restricts and compels to this end and to no other. When brothers stand up to assail the saints with accusations such as these that we are addressing, it is

questionable that they see the necessity for the proper speaking that builds up the church. If they really saw that God will accomplish the building up of the church by the speaking of all the members, they would drop any kind of speaking that does not bring us to that end. Why must some instead use speaking, that very gift that God has ordained for His work, to tear down, to discourage, to assail, and to condemn?

Our assessment is this: The Lord has opened up to us in these days the very great matter of the building up of His Body. He has opened this matter, not in the way of teaching alone, but more so in the way of a practical outworking. Instrumental to the building up of the Body are the gifts given by the Head. Thus, not only the building up is being recovered, but also the perfecting ministry of the gifts to facilitate the building up. And because the proper functioning of the gifts will bring the members into their proper function for the building up of the Body, the enemy, Satan, is incensed. All his system heretofore established, a system that has robbed the members of their function, perverted the gifts into a clergy, hindered the building up, and frustrated the Lord, is being overturned by the opening of this new way. But the devil is not taking this lying down. He has launched a great attack against the gifts in the hope that their function would be killed and no one would be perfected. His attack is twofold: (1) against the ministry that the Lord is employing to bring the saints into the building up of the Body; and (2) by the means of certain gifts of the Body, whom he uses to conduct the attack. We are deeply saddened that Brother Lee and his ministry are being attacked, for this ministry has the way to bring in the building up of the Body. But we are beyond grief that the brothers conducting this attack are some of the very gifts that could perfect the saints into their building function. These brothers are the product of years of ministry and were equipped to bring the saints on in the Lord's new way. They should be in our homes perfecting us with tears, but instead they are being used by the enemy to assail the saints, the churches, and the ministry. How skillful is our foe! We believe that should the Lord delay, history will lament our situation. What seemed to a few brothers to be the voicing of a "genuine concern," time will have proved to be winds of teaching that fit perfectly into a system of error premeditated by a cunning adversary.

CHAPTER TWENTY

JOHN INGALLS'S CLOSING REMARKS

We wish to comment on two of John's closing remarks.

John says, "If we've offended any of you saints, we ask you to please forgive us. We surely never intended to offend anyone of you." On the one hand, offended saints should receive the grace to forgive from their hearts. To maintain a sweet, harmonious church

life we need to forgive one another. On the other hand, John's word "If we've offended any of you saints" is somewhat disturbing, for it is altogether too general and superficial and it displays a lack of consciousness of the grave offenses caused not only to saints but also other churches. Certain things said and done in Anaheim since August 28, 1988, have caused damage and distress and should not be dealt with generally and superficially. There is the willingness to forgive, but there should also be the willingness to repent.

John's very last words are these: "I have peace with myself. I have peace with the Lord, and I have peace with all of you." Since there is more than one kind of peace we can feel (John 14:27; Jer. 6:14) and since there is such a thing as a counterfeit of the peace of God, we are wondering what kind of peace John has in mind. During the course of his speaking, he has breached the truth again and again, falsely accusing the churches and the saints and presenting a distorted picture of the Lord's recovery as a whole, yet he claims to be at peace. What kind of peace is this? "To live peacefully after breaching the truth - this is none other than obsession" (Watchman Nee, *Spiritual Reality or Obsession*, p. 60; Brother Nee says further: "To believe what is not a fact—this is obsession"; "Obsession is self-deception," pp. 56, 48).

Whether John has peace with himself and with the Lord we do not care to discuss. However, we are very concerned about his last claim: "I have peace with all of you." Is this really the case? Does John have peace with all of his co-workers, especially with his senior co-worker Brother Lee? Does John have genuine peace with the Body? Peace is not only an individual matter (Rom. 8:6) - it is also a corporate matter, a Body matter (Eph. 2:15). Colossians 3:15 speaks of the peace of Christ, to which we have been called in one Body. John, by his speaking, has violated the peace in the Body. He may feel that he is at peace with the Body, but in a very real sense the Body is not at peace with him. We invite our brother to treat this matter seriously and to take that proper biblical and human course of action that will produce genuine peace between himself and the Body.

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POSTSCRIPT

We have not been hasty in publishing this document. It was originally prepared in the late Spring of 1989, and it reflects the situation as it existed at that time. Since resigning from the eldership, John Ingalls has left the Lord's recovery, has been meeting with others in a divisive way, and has persisted in attacking the Lord's recovery and the ministry of Brother Lee. Furthermore, those sympathetic with John continue to distribute, for the most part surreptitiously, accusatory and slanderous material. It seems that the efforts of John Ingalls and those in league with him are directed not toward saving sinners or ministering to seeking Christians, but exclusively toward exerting a negative influence on the saints who remain faithful to the Lord in His recovery. Therefore, we have decided to make this document available to the saints. May the Lord bless His recovery as it advances according to His word and in His way!

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