

THE EVOLUTION OF LSM'S BIBLIOLOGY¹

"Whatever is in the Bible...is the Word of God"—W. Lee (1978)
"Not every word in the Bible is the Word of God"—W. Lee (1995)

Evangelical Christians² maintain the supremacy of Holy Scripture.³ They regard God as the Bible's ultimate author, believing God's Spirit inspired its writers to compose their epistles, histories, poetry, and prophecies; "All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable..." (2 Tim. 3:16). Moreover, they hold that God overruled⁴ in the preservation of both Old and New Testaments; hence the Bible's sixty-six books constitute a complete and closed canon. Evangelicals recognize the Bible as authoritative in matters of Christian faith, teaching, conduct, and church-life. The statement,⁵ "Because the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God...they are also inerrant and authoritative," illustrates evangelical Christians' stance on the primacy of Scripture. Witness Lee, Living Stream Ministry⁶ (LSM), and LSM's local churches claim to be orthodox in this regard. LSM recently declared,⁷ "The Christians in the local churches share common doctrine with all other mainstream, orthodox, evangelical Christians...including the belief that the Holy Bible is the complete divine revelation verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit." Indeed, they claim to surpass other Christians in venerating the Bible; W. Lee proclaims,⁸ "The very great, particular characteristic in the Lord's recovery is to do everything according to the Bible." However, he is also on record saying,⁹ "The whole Scripture was written under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, **but not every word in the Bible is the word of God.**" W. Lee also asserts,¹⁰ "In the Bible there are **a great many words that are not God's words.**" What do these radical statements mean? Does LSM really accept the whole New Testament as the authoritative Word of God or only certain parts of it? Does LSM's canon contain all twenty seven New Testament books? Is their view of Scripture truly the same as "all other mainstream, orthodox, evangelical Christians"? Is LSM's bibliology orthodox?

LSM's Declarations about the Bible

What do Witness Lee, Living Stream Ministry (LSM), and LSM-affiliated churches—collectively "LSM"—believe about the Bible? Their standard response is,¹¹ "We definitely believe that all Scripture is God-breathed, that is, inspired by God." However, this statement leaves crucial questions unanswered. At what level is the Bible "inspired"—merely its general thought and concept, or literally, word-by-word¹²? LSM's *Truth Lessons* affirm the Bible's verbal (word-by-word) inspiration.¹³ "The entire Bible originates from God; every word and every sentence, every iota and every tittle (Matt. 5:18), are God-inspired," they say. W. Lee also declares,¹⁴ "We believe that every word of every book of the Bible has been breathed out by God."

Scripture is also the Word of God. In view of his later teaching, it is important to note that in the 1970s W. Lee affirmed that the entire Bible is God's Word. He said,¹⁵

The whole Bible is the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16). Do not take any word other than the Bible as the Word of God...Whatever is in the Bible, you may rest assured, is the Word of God.

Similarly the whole New Testament is identified as God's speaking,¹⁶ "We need to consider the entire New Testament, from the first word of Matthew to the last word of Revelation, as God's speaking through the different mouths and hands of the apostles...the apostles' teaching." In technical terms, LSM endorses the Bible's plenary (complete) inspiration. Finally, W. Lee taught that Scripture is free from error—infallible. The most comprehensive statement we've found, says,¹⁷

The Bible is the Word of God. We believe that the Bible, word by word, is divinely inspired by God (2 Pet. 1:21), as the breath of God (2 Tim. 3:16). The genuine Christians do not have any doubt about this point. We must believe that the Bible is God's infallible Word.

Based on these declarations, Witness Lee, LSM, and their affiliated churches affirm the verbal, plenary, infallible inspiration of the Scriptures. They avow the whole Bible is "God's infallible¹⁸ Word."

LSM's statements concerning Scripture match those of mainstream, orthodox, evangelical Christians. Hence LSM's bibliology appears to be orthodox. However, first impressions can be misleading; a few years after affirming—"the Bible is God's infallible Word"—W. Lee is on record saying,¹⁹ "**not every word in the Bible is the word of God.**" This raises the question—has LSM's view of Scripture changed? Here we examine the evolution of LSM's bibliology.

LSM's Initial Hermeneutic

It appears that LSM's changing view of Scripture can be traced back to their evolving hermeneutic, their principles of Bible interpretation. In W. Lee's earliest teaching (in the 1950s) about interpreting Scripture, he emphasized "not sacrificing any portion of the Word," saying:²⁰

As long as one or two verses do not allow a certain interpretation, we have to give up that interpretation. **We have to respect every portion of the Bible.** Only when an interpretation harmonizes with the whole Bible can this interpretation be considered reliable. Any verse that forbids a certain interpretation of the truth must not be sacrificed. Instead, that certain interpretation must be abandoned, and we must wait for God's further revelation. If we study the Bible this way, we will not fall easily into error.

According to this principle every Bible portion is to be respected. Any interpretation is subservient to Scripture; it ought to be abandoned if the Bible contradicts that teaching. Scripture's preeminence was also emphasized in W. Lee's 1978 statement that:²¹

The whole Bible is the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16). Do not take any word other than the Bible as the Word of God; otherwise you can be led into heresy. **Apart from the Bible, you have no sure word of God. Whatever is in the Bible, you may rest assured, is the Word of God.**

This statement unequivocally equates the Bible with the Word of God. W. Lee states categorically that nothing else is God's Word. He says, "Do not take any word other than the Bible as the Word of God....Apart from the Bible, you have no sure word of God." In view of his subsequent teaching, it is important to note W. Lee's statements about the "word of God." Beyond merely asserting that Scripture is God-inspired, he affirmed²² "the whole Bible is the Word of God...Whatever is in the Bible...is the Word of God." However, shortly thereafter, W. Lee's teaching contradicted this.

LSM's Later Hermeneutic—"Not every word in the Bible is the Word of God"

In the early 1980s, W. Lee conducted the *Life-study* of the Epistle of James. Concerning the²³ "major problem...of the inspiration of the Scriptures," he introduced a novel idea, declaring,²⁴

We definitely believe that all Scripture is God-breathed, that is inspired by God. We believe that every word of every book of the Bible has been breathed out by God...[But] this **does not mean that every word in the holy Book is the word of God...In the Bible there are a great many words that are not God's words.**

Reiterating this notion, he said,²⁵ "We believe that the entire Bible, every word in the Scripture, is God-breathed. *Nevertheless, not every word in the Bible is the word of God.*" Before examining this new doctrine, let's look at W. Lee's later teaching; did he maintain this view?

In his final years, while expounding the "High Peak truths," W. Lee revisited the subject of interpreting Scripture. He reaffirmed his view that Scripture is God-inspired, saying,²⁶ "All the sixty-six books of the Holy Scripture are written through the inspiration of the Spirit of God." Yet, once again, he immediately qualified this. Under the heading, "Not Every Word Written through the Spirit of God Being the Word of God," W. Lee is on record asserting,²⁷

The entire Scripture is written by inspiration of the Spirit of God, but **this does not mean that every word** written through the Spirit of God as a portion **of the Holy Scripture is the word of God.** Many portions of the Holy Scripture are rather the words spoken by persons...other than God.

Again W. Lee explicitly asserts that²⁸ "not every word recorded in the Bible is the word of God," adding, "but the record is by the inspiration of the Spirit." In his final years, W. Lee continued to espouse the radical idea introduced in the 1980s.

Paradigm Shift: From "God's Inspired Word" to Scripture's "Utterances of Men"

"In the Bible...a great many words...are not God's words"—W. Lee

The assertion—"not every word in the Bible is the word of God"—certainly has "shock value." It is a radical departure from earlier statements quoted above. Local church members sat for decades under W. Lee's ministry, yet to many, this speaking was novel. Turning to James' epistle, a new distinction was introduced; never before²⁹ had W. Lee clearly differentiated between God-inspired Scripture and the Word of God. Previously, these exactly coincided as "God's inspired Word." Why

the new distinction? Has LSM's definition of "the word of God" changed? When Evangelicals refer to the Bible as God's Word, they mean it is God's speaking in the sense that every word proceeded out of God's mouth (Matt. 4:4). W. Lee's own exposition says,³⁰ "All Scripture is God-breathed. Hence, the words in the Scriptures are the words that proceed out through the mouth of God"—God's word. Also,³¹ "God's Word is God's breathing out (2 Tim. 3:16). The Bible is God's breathing out." So, isn't the whole Bible "God's Word"?

In the strictest sense, only words directly attributed to Jehovah ("Jehovah said..." or "Thus saith the Lord..."), words uttered by the Lord Jesus Himself and the Spirit's speaking (e.g., Rev. 22:17) are the direct word of God. But surely that is not what LSM's new definition means! God's word includes more than that! Such a narrow definition contradicts W. Lee's own teaching about the "word of Christ" (Col. 3:16). Strictly interpreted, the "word of Christ" equals Jesus' words recorded in the Gospels, which some Bibles print in red letters. Yet W. Lee rejects this definition. Arguing for a broader definition, he says, Christ³² "speaks not only directly in the Gospels, but also through His members, the apostles and prophets, in Acts, in the Epistles, and in Revelation. All these may be considered His word...The word of Christ includes the entire New Testament." So, the entire New Testament is Christ's word. Elsewhere he says,³³ "The apostles' teaching in the New Testament is altogether based on the principle of incarnation [that] God speaks in man's speaking.... This is the reason **the writings of Peter, John, and Paul recorded in the Bible could become God's words...the New Testament.**" This wider definition of God's word includes the apostles' teachings, the entire New Testament. It also matches W. Lee's declaration, "The whole Bible is the Word of God...Whatever is in the Bible...is the Word of God." Clearly LSM's lexicon has changed. In stark contrast to his prior teaching, W. Lee now proclaimed,³⁴ "**In the Bible there are a great many words that are not God's words;**" these are³⁵ "merely human... the utterances of men." Somehow, LSM needs to explain why the "principle of incarnation" has ceased to apply, because under it "**the writings of Peter, John, and Paul...become God's words...the New Testament.**" Or does this principle only apply to some New Testament writers and not to others (James, Jude, etc.)? Also, for LSM, which words of Scripture are the "words of God"? Which are merely "the utterances of men"? We return to these questions below.

Thus far, this much is clear—to LSM, the "word of God" is a subset of Scripture! In LSM's eyes, the Bible has a two-tier system. New Testament writings belong to two categories—some parts are both God-inspired *and* God's word; other parts are merely man's words recorded under divine-inspiration. LSM's bibliology has undergone a subtle evolution, or (more accurately) a seismic shift. Originally they asserted "**Whatever is in the Bible...is the Word of God.**" This matches the orthodox definition of "God's Word," as all Scripture, "God-breathed and profitable" (2 Tim. 3:16) and "every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). However, in a dramatic paradigm shift, W. Lee asserted that *not* every Scripture is the word of God. We can summarize LSM's new position:

- [1] **Does LSM believe that Scripture's every word is inspired by God?—YES**
- [2] **Does LSM believe that Scripture's every word is the word of God?—NO!**

LSM denies the exact correspondence between Scripture and God's Word. Realizing, perhaps, the unorthodoxy of this doctrine, W. Lee declared,³⁶ "I run the risk of being unjustly accused of not believing that every word in the Bible is God-breathed, inspired by Him." "However ...there is no ground to say such a thing," he responded. But this response deflects attention from the main point. The issue is *not* whether he concurs that "every word in the Bible is God-breathed, inspired by Him," (question [1] above.) The crucial issue is his assertion that "not every word in the Bible is the word of God," (question [2]). The indictment is **denying the Bible's every word is the Word of God!** Moreover, the two statements are not independent. Given his denial of the second proposition, what does W. Lee's assertion—that every word is God-inspired—mean? Does it mean that *all parts* of Scripture are authoritative? W. Lee himself asks—³⁷"What, then, does it mean to say that the Bible is fully inspired by God?" His response—"It means that it is of God that whatever is recorded in the Bible is included there." Yes it does; but, is that all? When some portions of Scripture are "God's word" and others are merely human words—which parts are authoritative? Jesus said, "Your [God the Father's] word is truth" (John 17:17); only *God's Word* is truth. Doesn't LSM's denial that all Scripture is God's word undermine the Bible's authority?

How Much of the Bible Is Authoritative—All or Part?

Mainline orthodox evangelicals teach that³⁸ “Because the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God...they are also inerrant and authoritative.” Scripture’s authority derives from its being the “inspired Word of God.” For evangelicals the entire Bible is God’s inspired Word; therefore, every part is authoritative. Hence, they say,³⁹ “Each and every part from Genesis to Revelation is the very Word of God. Because it is inspired by God, the Scriptures are therefore authoritative.”

LSM’s stance differs significantly from mainline evangelicals. LSM agrees the entire Bible is divinely inspired. Yet to them, *only some parts* of Scripture are God’s words; other parts are merely man’s words (recorded under divine inspiration). LSM’s Bible is a hybrid with two distinct, separable parts—one part God’s Word and another man’s words. Only the former are authoritative. Under LSM’s paradigm, some parts of Scripture are mere “utterances of men.” These are not authoritative; they carry no weight in directing the believer’s Christian life and church life. Jesus said,⁴⁰ “Scripture cannot be broken,” i.e., cannot be emptied of its force (John 10:35). Yet such passages—recorded in Scripture, yet not “God’s word”—are eviscerated of authority by LSM’s bibliology.

LSM’s Bibliology Contradicts Watchman Nee’s Teaching

“The New Testament...is one hundred percent God’s word”—W. Nee

LSM contends that Scripture consists of two distinct, separable parts—one part God’s Word and another man’s words, and that these elements can be distinguished from each other. They claim certain passages are mere human utterances, not God’s words. However, Watchman Nee taught that the New Testament writings are simultaneously God’s word and man’s word. He says,⁴¹ “The basic principle of God’s speaking is...it is truly man’s word and at the same time truly God’s word...It is man speaking, yet God recognizes it as His word.” This duality characterizes the New Testament:⁴² “We can see this in Paul, Peter, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and we can see this in many servants of the Lord. Human elements are present in God’s word...God’s word becomes man’s word and man’s word becomes God’s word.” Watchman Nee regards efforts to separate God’s word from man’s element as misdirected and futile, saying,⁴³ “Man always wants to arrange God’s word into sections, with some parts being...spoken by God...with no human element whatsoever. But we must remember that God’s word always bears the mark of human traits.” Hence Watchman Nee says,⁴⁴

The outstanding characteristic of the New Testament, from the first page to the last, is that it is a record of man’s speaking. It is absolutely human...At the same time, however, it is absolutely divine; it is one hundred percent God’s word.

In contrast to LSM, W. Nee affirms that “the New Testament...is one hundred percent God’s word.”

Paul’s Human Opinions Recognized as God’s Word

1 Corinthians chapter seven is an obvious passage for LSM to separate man’s words from God’s words. Paul states clearly several times that he has no word or command from the Lord, yet he offers his opinion (vv. 26, 28–9, 32, 35, 40). Surely this fits LSM’s criterion of being man’s word, not God’s word! Yet, Watchman Nee says⁴⁵ Paul “was very clear that the Lord had not said anything. However in the end, his word became the word of the Holy Spirit...It was the Lord’s opinion.” Again he says,⁴⁶ Paul “dared not say that his word was the Lord’s commandment. He only told them his opinion. Yet in the end, God acknowledged his opinion. God recognized Paul’s opinion as His own.” An unbiased application of LSM’s new doctrine would conclude Paul’s opinion is merely man’s word, *not* God’s word. However, W. Nee asserts that God recognized Paul’s opinion as His own; Paul’s word became God’s word. This, he says,⁴⁷ is the highest point in the ministry of God’s word. What is the basis of W. Nee’s bold assertion? It is the fact that, under divine sovereignty, Paul’s views were recorded and canonized in the New Testament; we read and acknowledge them *as God’s word* in 1 Corinthians chapter seven. Watchman Nee contradicts LSM’s new paradigm of dividing Scripture into God’s word and man’s word.

Paradoxically, W. Lee applies conflicting principles to the epistles of Paul and James. When expounding Paul’s letter, he follows W. Nee, saying,⁴⁸ “Everything spoken by Paul in this chapter has nonetheless become part of...the New Testament,” because⁴⁹ “the Lord becomes one with His apostles...Both speak together. His word becomes their word, and whatever they utter is His word.” W. Lee extends this principle to all the apostles, saying,⁵⁰ “Because all the apostles are sons of God

...their speaking for God is also God's speaking....Hence all the speakings by the apostles are God's speaking;" therefore "the Apostles' teaching" encompasses the whole New Testament. This should include James' epistle, since he is recognized by Scripture as an apostle (Gal. 1:19). Yet paradoxically, an opposing principle is invoked with James' writing—that of dividing God's word from man's word, because "not every word recorded in the Bible is the word of God." Yet no justification is offered for this asymmetry. When diverse "principles" are applied in evaluating different writers, is it surprising that the implications differ? Shouldn't the same principles be applied in both cases?

Which Word of Scripture Is the Word of God?

In LSM's view, which words of Scripture are God's Word? Responding, W. Lee illustrates:⁵¹ "Satan's word is recorded in the Bible...but the word recorded is not the word of God." Thirty-five chapters of Job are discounted because⁵² "instead of being the word of God, many of the words spoken by Job and his friends were merely human." Many Psalms⁵³ "are surely not God's words, but words...out of the psalmists' mouth from their natural sentiment;" they are "merely utterances of men." Peter's outspoken responses (e.g., Matt. 16:22)⁵⁴ are "clearly not the word spoken by God but the word spoken by Peter...usurped by, and even having become Satan." W. Lee concludes,⁵⁵ "These illustrations show that in the Bible...a number of words are not by God but by man and even by God's enemy, Satan."

W. Lee cites Satan's words,⁵⁶ recorded in Genesis, to establish the principle that "not every word in the Bible is the Word of God." Yet no one who asserts that the whole Bible is God's Word ever claims Scripture's every word is a quote of God's direct speaking! They mean Scripture is God's speaking in a broader sense. The apostle John's Revelation was "made known *by signs*...to His slave John, who testified *the word of God*" (Rev. 1:1-2). God's word in Revelation is not mainly God's direct speaking; rather it is conveyed through signs, visions recorded as narrative pictures in John's Apocalypse. The same is true of John's Gospel (2:11; 20:30) and of Scripture in general. The Genesis record of "Man's Fall" (including Satan's speaking) is surely God's word in this sense. It is a "sign." W. Lee was a master at interpreting the Genesis 3 "sign"; so why did he try to use this case to establish a "new principle"? The subtle change in defining "God's word" is (at best) confusing and (at worst) looks like sleight of hand. This major switch in LSM's lexicon is never explained or justified.

In dividing God's word from man's word, W. Lee offered two "governing principles of the interpretation of the Scripture." The first principle is that⁵⁷ "all the Scripture should be interpreted with the Scripture. Every portion, even a single word, of the Scripture should be interpreted with and according to the entire Scripture." This principle makes sense if all Scripture is God's word. But LSM denies this equivalence. We ask: when only some Scripture is God's word, how should this principle be applied? We are not told. The second principle,⁵⁸ "the hermeneutic key to the entire Bible," is that⁵⁹ "The eternal economy of God is the central line of the entire Scripture. The interpretation of the Scripture should be strictly governed by this central line. If any interpretation...is not in harmony with God's economy, it is off." What is this "central line"? W. Lee answers,⁶⁰ "There is a line...recorded in the Scriptures showing us how *God became man to make man God*." This, says W. Lee, is "the essence of the Bible." It is also LSM's criterion for determining which Scripture is "God's word."

Jettisoning James' Epistle as "surely not the words of God"

Luther called James⁶¹ "an Epistle of straw," good for burning! It didn't fit his justification by faith, so he relegated it (with Hebrews and Jude) to the end of the Bible, beside Revelation. W. Lee's judgment also is severe. When evaluated against LSM's "central line," James is found wanting. W. Lee says,⁶² "I do not believe that James knew anything about God's eternal economy...He did not...give even a hint that he knew the eternal economy of God." He finds James⁶³ "devoid of God's eternal purpose," "devoid of the visions of God's high revelation," and "devoid of the main items in the New Testament." Hence, he concludes, James' epistle is⁶⁴ "surely not the words of God." Concerning many things,⁶⁵ "James' word...may be godly, but *it is not God's word*." James is *de facto* jettisoned from God's Word; it is relegated to the second tier, the lower level of human words uttered by godly men, recorded by divine inspiration. This judgment raises more questions—are there other New Testament portions which (according to LSM) are "not the words of God"? Parts of Matthew seem to venerate the Old Covenant law and practices (e.g., Matt. 5:17–24)? Should these also be jettisoned from God's word?

“Chopping the Feet to Fit the Shoes”

Under LSM’s radical hermeneutic, their interpretation determines which Scripture is the “word of God.” That’s the reverse of their initial position. Formerly W. Lee said, “Any verse that forbids a certain interpretation of the truth [must] not be sacrificed.” Interpretation was subject to Scripture; the interpretation was abandoned, not Scripture. But now, the reverse is true. Any Scripture judged inconsistent with LSM’s “central line” is not God’s word; it is discounted as mere man’s word. LSM’s interpretation now trumps Scripture; they are the arbiter of which Scriptures are God’s word!

Both Luther and W. Lee were chagrined by James’ Epistle. It’s inclusion in the New Testament canon seems to contradict their pivotal doctrine. Their drastic solution to this conundrum is “to chop the feet to fit the shoes” (Chinese proverb); by *de facto* jettisoning James, the “feet of Scripture” are amputated so they fit the “shoes of their interpretation”!⁶⁶ Yet, perhaps, the problem is “the shoes”!

LSM’s Canon within the Canon of Scripture

For LSM, the scope of acceptable interpretations has been narrowed to one “central line.” In W. Lee’s earlier *Life-study*, James’ practical Christian living was appraised as a needed balance, a supplement,⁶⁷ to Paul’s focus on God’s economy. Alongside LSM’s “central line,” James’ “supporting line,” was condoned. However, a decade later, W. Lee issued his *Crystallization-study*; in this polemic,⁶⁸ James’ balance was rejected as unnecessary and unacceptable. By this time, not only was God’s economy-- that “God became man to make man God”--*the* “central line of the entire Scripture,” it had become the *only* acceptable line. This “major” cannot be combined with any other “minor;” LSM demands for their “central line” an uncontested monopoly on Scriptural interpretation! No other “supporting line” is tolerated! Moreover, LSM takes this dogmatic stance despite the fact that [Scripture never explicitly affirms that “God became man to make man God.”](#) Rather this is an extra-biblical doctrine with a long history within Eastern Orthodoxy. Bible scholars warn against such extravagant claims. University of Durham Divinity Professor, James Dunn says,⁶⁹ “It is possible for some Christians to take an interpretation of scripture...to exalt it above all other alternative views of scripture and to use it to deny validity to those others, even when they have at least as strong an exegetical base.” LSM’s dogma fits this description.

Some might argue that every Christian group or denomination has a “canon within the canon of Scripture.”⁷⁰ This may well be true. However, LSM’s local churches claim they are not just another denomination; they are the Body of Christ,⁷¹ receiving all believers! Such a claim requires them to recognize nothing short of the whole New Testament canon. They must include all God includes.⁷²

Does LSM Recognize the Complete New Testament Canon?

The net result of LSM’s evolved hermeneutic is that LSM’s canon—their “word of God”—is less than the whole Bible. It excludes parts of both Old and New Testaments; LSM now has a “canon within the canon of Scripture.” Most of Job and many Psalms are excluded from LSM’s Old Testament canon—“God’s word”; James’ Epistle is *de facto* jettisoned from their New Testament canon. Yet all Paul’s writings (even his opinions) are accepted as “God’s word;” W. Lee says,⁷³ “Whatever the apostle [Paul] teaches, regardless in what way, becomes the word of God in the New Testament.” There’s an obvious asymmetry here—Paul is accepted unconditionally while James is rejected. Yet, history tells us that, under God’s sovereignty, both Paul and James were recognized as legitimate parts of the New Testament canon (AD 397). We ask—What about books like Matthew? Some Bible scholars⁷⁴ view James as an exposition of the “Sermon on the Mount” (Matt. 5–7). If LSM rejects James, what about the “Sermon on the Mount” which also has Old Covenant overtones? Will LSM reject that also? Is LSM sliding down the slippery slope of a shrinking canon?

We ask—does LSM really recognize the complete New Testament canon? W. Lee expresses approval⁷⁵ for the New Testament’s canonization. Yet doesn’t LSM’s evolved bibliology deny its validity? Evangelicals avow that God overruled⁴ in the preservation of both Testaments; hence the sixty-six books of Scripture constitute a complete and closed canon. Nothing should be added or subtracted (Rev. 22: 18–19). By definition, the “canon” is the measuring rod defining divinely-acceptable Christianity. All twenty-seven books⁷⁶ “of the New Testament can claim to be justifiable

interpretations of the Christ-event—James as well as Paul, Revelation as well as the Pastorals.” If we believe in God’s sovereignty, there were no “mistakes” of omission or inclusion. Hence believers can take the Bible as their only standard⁷⁷ and sufficient guide (W. Nee). But this also implies we ought to recognize as divinely-approved all expressions of the Christian faith represented in the New Testament canon. Professor Dunn says,⁷⁸ “*To recognize the canon of the New Testament is to affirm the diversity of Christianity. We cannot claim to accept the authority of the New Testament unless we are willing to accept as valid whatever form of Christianity can [be justified by] the New Testament.*” It is an indisputable historical fact that James’ Epistle was canonized, along with Hebrews, Revelation, Peter, etc. Under God’s sovereignty exercised over the canon of Scripture,⁷⁹ “guidelines were drawn so as to include James as well as...Paul, the Apocalypse as well as Acts, John as well as the Synoptic [gospels].” All twenty-seven New Testament books are divinely-inspired and profitable. *They are all, in their entirety, God’s Word.*⁸⁰ LSM denies this.

Conclusion

In his early writings Witness Lee taught that the Bible is God’s infallible word, verbally inspired in its entirety by God (2 Tim. 3:16). This matches evangelical orthodoxy. However, over the decades LSM’s bibliology evolved. Later W. Lee taught that, although all Scripture was recorded by divine inspiration, “*not every word in the Bible is the word of God.*” This produces a two-tier system. Some Scripture is God’s authoritative word; other Scriptures (e.g., James) are man’s word, eviscerated of authority. The criterion for dividing man’s word from God’s word is LSM’s “central line,” the doctrine that “God became man that man might become God.” Any Scripture judged inconsistent with this is not God’s word. As a result, LSM has a “canon-within-the-canon” of Scripture. Moreover, LSM claims a monopoly for their “central line, their hermeneutic key.” This “major” cannot be combined with any other “minor;” no other “supporting line” of exposition is tolerated. Earlier, in W. Lee’s *Life-study*, James’ Christian ethics was appraised as a useful balance to Paul’s focus on God’s economy. However, later, James’ writing was rejected; no balance or supplement was necessary. This is LSM’s evolved bibliology. Yet LSM’s recent actions—quarantines, denunciation meetings, DCP’s “Attack Pack” of books,⁸¹ law-suits against fellow-believers—suggest James’ Christian ethics are sorely lacking, despite their doctrine of the “God-man living.” LSM has lots of “God-man talk,” but very little “God-man walk.” This is the practical issue of their evolved bibliology.

It is difficult (if not impossible) to reconcile LSM’s initial position with their later stance. Some ask—what is the current teaching among LSM’s local churches? The unequivocal answer is the later doctrine—not every word in the Bible is God’s word. This is part of LSM’s⁸² “High Peak of the Divine Revelation” which supersedes all prior teaching. For LSM’s churches, the “high peak truth,” that “God became man to make man God,” is the “diamond in the box of the Bible.”⁸³ Apparently for them the Bible itself (“the box”) pales compared to the “diamond” of LSM’s doctrines, including their bibliology.

LSM claims⁸⁴ their “local churches share common doctrine with all other mainstream, orthodox, evangelical Christians...including the belief that the Holy Bible is the complete divine revelation verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit.” However, an inspection of LSM’s bibliology refutes their claim to *share common doctrine about the Bible* with mainstream, orthodox, evangelical believers. Indeed it seems disingenuous of LSM to publicly state only one-half of their bibliology; full disclosure requires LSM and its affiliated local churches to inform the wider Christian public of the “other half”—their tenet that⁸⁵

*We believe that the entire Bible, every word in the Scripture, is God-breathed.
Nevertheless, **not every word in the Bible is the word of God.***

Evangelicals would surely reject W. Lee’s pronouncement that “*not every word in the Bible is the word of God,*” and the resulting two-tier “canon-within-the-canon of Scripture.” Mainstream evangelicals disavow W. Lee’s assertions that “James’ word...is not God’s word” and that Scripture’s inclusion of his Epistle was solely to “expose James’ mistake.” They consider LSM’s bibliology unorthodox. It is difficult (if not impossible) to reconcile LSM’s teaching about Scripture with evangelical Christians’ declaration that⁸⁶ “we believe in the verbal, plenary, infallible inspiration of the Bible.” Observers question whether LSM’s public statements are a facade disguising their unorthodox doctrines about the Bible.

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October, 2008

NOTES:

1. "The term Bibliology (from Greek *biblos* meaning "book") refers particularly to the study of the nature of the Bible as divine revelation. It often includes such topics as revelation, inspiration, inerrancy, canonicity, textual criticism, illumination, and interpretation." ["*Bibliology: The Bible*," by Greg Herrick, Th.M., Ph.D.] My thanks to those who commented on earlier versions of this article. As usual, the author alone is responsible for the views expressed in this piece. These views should *not* be attributed to any Christian workers, elders or local churches with whom the author is associated.
2. British historian David Bebbington [David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 2-17.] defines Evangelical Christians in terms of four specific hallmarks of evangelical religion: [1] *conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed [by receiving the gospel of Christ]; [2] *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort [e.g. evangelism]; [3] *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and [4] *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross [Christ's redemption for justification]. Note the emphasis on the Bible in point [3].
3. Bishop Ryle said evangelicalism is characterized by "the absolute supremacy assigned to Holy Scripture" e.g. all spiritual truth is to be found in its pages. Quote from David W. Bebbington (above).
4. Abilene Christian University Professor, Neil R. Lightfoot expresses this thought as follows, "each book on its own merit—not without, Christians believe, a guiding Providence—took its place in the accepted canon of New Testament Scripture." [Neil R. Lightfoot, *How We Got the Bible*, 2nd Edition, p. 109] The late University of Manchester Professor, F. F. Bruce said, "There is no better example of [the Holy Spirit's] operation than in the recognition by the members of the Early Church of the [New Testament] books which were given by inspiration of God to stand alongside the books of the Old Covenant...and with them to make up the written Word of God." [F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, p. 111] Some scholars appeal to Jesus' statement in Matt. 24:35 that 'Heaven and Earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.' They say this applies to the Bible in whole and in part. Thus, God protects His Word in history as it is copied, recopied, translated and distributed. They call this "Providential Preservation."
5. This particular quote is from: <http://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-inspired.html> The websites authors describe themselves as: "Christian, Protestant, conservative, evangelical, fundamental, and non-denominational."
6. Living Stream Ministry is a registered not-for-profit organization established by W. Lee which publishes the writings of W. Lee and LSM's "blended brothers." Most of the quotations cited here are from W. Lee's own writings. However, some LSM-publications were authored by people other than W. Lee, even though they appeared in his name (for example, LSM's "*Truth Lessons*," "*Life Lessons*" etc). LSM's booklet, "*The Beliefs & Practices of the local churches*" was written by "The Co-workers in the Lord's recovery"—no specific names given. Hence, strictly speaking the designation "LSM says" encompasses more than "W. Lee says." However, for most occurrences in this article, they are synonymous. For the sake of brevity, we use the term "LSM" in the remainder of this article as a short-hand term for Bro. Witness Lee and the "blended (blending) brothers" associated with Living Stream Ministry (LSM) and LSM-affiliated local churches. From the context it will be clear whether quotes are from Witness Lee's LSM-published books, the "blended brothers'" LSM-published writings (e.g. *The Ministry* magazine) or LSM-affiliated Internet websites (e.g. note 7 below). Quotations from LSM's publications are covered under "fair use of copyright" provisions.
7. This statement appears on a DCP-website (i.e. LSM's "Defense & Confirmation Project"). No indication is given on this website as to who the actual authors are. Given this lack of identification, we designate it as "LSM says." Entry under: "Living Stream Ministry & The Local Church: Background Information--Description of The Local Church and Living Stream Ministry" posted on the "ContendingForTheFaith Internet website at: <http://www.contendingforthefaith.com/libellitigations/harvest-house-et-al/ministry.html>
8. Witness Lee, *Elders' Training*, Book, Vol. 7, p. 107
9. W. Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 3, p. 33 emphasis added. The quote in context reads: "The whole Scripture was written under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, but **not every word in the Bible is the word of God**. The word itself may not be the word of God, but it was recorded by some writer under the inspiration of the Spirit of God." The following paragraph contains a similar assertion: "The entire Scripture is written by inspiration of the Spirit of God, but this does **not** mean that **every word** written through the Spirit of God as a portion **of the Holy Scripture is the word of God**. Many portions of the Holy Scripture are rather the words spoken by persons (including Satan) other than God. I would like to present seven evident illustrations to show this. Three are from the Old Testament. First, there is Satan's word in Genesis 3. Second, there are Job and his three friends plus Elihu in Job 3—37. The third illustration from the Old Testament is the psalmists'

- natural sentiment. Three illustrations from the New Testament are concerning Peter, and the fourth one is concerning James." [Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, pp. 88-89]
10. W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, p. 128, emphasis added. W. Lee also says, "Not every word in the Bible is the word of God...Many words recorded in the Scriptures are the words of Satan, evil men, God's opposers, and even the nonsensical talk of godly men." [W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, p. 132]
 11. W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, p. 127 A similar statement appears in Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 3
 12. This possibility is discussed by: <http://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-inspired.html> . They state: "While there are different views as to what extent the Bible is inspired, there can be no doubt that the Bible itself claims that every word, in every part of the Bible, is inspired by God (1 Corinthians 2:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). This view of the Scriptures is often referred to as "verbal plenary" inspiration. What that means is that the inspiration extends to the very words themselves (verbal inspiration), **not just concepts or ideas**; and that the inspiration extends to all parts of Scripture and all subject matters of Scripture (plenary inspiration). There are some people who believe that only parts of the Bible are inspired, or only the thoughts or concepts that deal with religion are inspired, but these views of inspiration fall short of what the Bible itself claims. Full verbal plenary inspiration is an essential characteristic of the Word of God."
 13. W. Lee, *Truth Lessons*, Level 1, Vol. 1, p. 4. The quote, in context reads: "The entire Bible originates from God; **every word and every sentence**, every iota and every tittle (Matt. 5:18), **are God-inspired**. Hence, men should neither add to or take away anything from the Holy Scriptures (Rev. 22:18-19)." Note that (according to my knowledge) LSM's *Truth Lessons* were not written by W. Lee, nor are they edited versions of his messages. Nevertheless, W. Lee supervised this set of publications and they appear under his name.
 14. W. Lee's statement, quoted above (see note 11) continues: "We definitely believe that all Scripture is God-breathed, that is, inspired by God. We believe that every word of every book of the Bible has been breathed out by God." [W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, p. 127]
 15. W. Lee, *Life Messages*, message #24, p. 216 (emphasis added) message given Nov. 11, 1978, in Spokane WA, USA. The statement in context reads: "The whole Bible is the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16). Do not take any word other than the Bible as the Word of God; otherwise you can be led into heresy. Apart from the Bible, you have no sure word of God. **Whatever is in the Bible, you may rest assured, is the Word of God** (p. 216)...The Life-study messages are rich, **but not one of them is as rich as the Bible.**"(p. 217) [W. Lee, *Life Messages*, #24, pp. 216-7 message given Nov. 11, 1978, Spokane WA.]
 16. W. Lee, *The Ministry of the New Testament & the Teaching & Fellowship of the Apostles*, p. 22 The quote in context reads: "We need to consider the entire New Testament, from the first word of Matthew to the last word of Revelation, as God's speaking through the different mouths and hands of the apostles. This is the apostles' teaching." This quote appears at the conclusion of a section defining "the apostles' teaching" [W. Lee, *The Ministry of the New Testament & the Teaching...of the Apostles*, pp. 19-22] W. Lee defines "the teaching of the apostles' " as "consisting of" [1] "The teachings of the Lord Jesus in the four Gospels" (p. 19) [2] "The teachings of the Apostles in the Acts" (p. 10) plus [3] "The teachings of the Apostles in the Epistles from Romans to Revelation" (p. 20) W. Lee says, "Surely the Lord's speaking in the four Gospels was God's speaking. However, we may think that it is wrong to say that the apostles' speaking...also is God's speaking. According to Hebrews 1:2, today God speaks in the Son...Because all the apostles are sons of God...their speaking for God is also God's speaking...Hence all the speakings by the apostles are God's speaking." [W. Lee, *The Ministry of the New Testament & the Teaching...of the Apostles*, p. 20]
 17. W. Lee, *The Speciality, Generality & Practicality...* Chp. 1. The 1978 booklet, *The Beliefs & Practices and Practices of the local churches*, contains the following statements concerning the Bible: [1] "We believe that the Holy Bible is the complete divine revelation verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit." [2] "We stand on the Holy Scriptures, not according to any traditional interpretation, but according to the pure Word of God." [3] "All teachings, inspirations, and guidance which claim the Holy Spirit as their source must be checked by God's revelation in His Word."
 18. W. Lee and LSM affirm Scripture is infallible; but they fail to address the issue of Bible inerrancy championed by conservative evangelicals. Does LSM regard the Bible as inerrant? The distinction, Claremont College Professor, Stephen T. Davis, explains is that:¹⁸ "The Bible is *inerrant* if and only if it makes no false or misleading statements on any topic whatsoever [including recorded historical events, matters of science, geology, geography etc.]. The Bible is *infallible* if and only if it makes no false or misleading statements on any matter of faith and practice." The difference reflects a divergence in scope—Inerrancy is more encompassing, including, not only matters related to God, Christ and salvation, but *all* subjects. Inerrancy is the "litmus test" of orthodox bibliology for conservative evangelicals. LSM's silence on this issue leaves the question of inerrancy unanswered. Perhaps this reflects LSM's self-imposed isolation from Christianity. Whatever the reason, the fact that LSM's statements ignore the issue of the Bible's inerrancy, leaves LSM's orthodoxy suspect in the eyes of this vocal sector of evangelicals. Stephen T. Davis, *The Debate about the Bible: Inerrancy versus Infallibility*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), p. 23. Professor James D. G. Dunn points out that "The word 'infallible' was [considered] more flexible than the word 'inerrant': a fact that we should not ignore." [James D. G. Dunn, *The Living Word*, p. 91] The [Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy](#) declares: "We affirm that Scripture in its

entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit. We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood." The following statement highlights the central issues in this debate: "The heart of the disagreement is the accuracy of the Bible's account of items not integral to salvation, for [all evangelicals insist] on the complete authority of the Bible's presentation of the gospel. Therefore, **inerrancy tends to be a position about how precisely the Bible reports scientific, geological, and similar information, as well as whether it contains any internal inconsistencies about historical events.** The issue is not about authority per se, but about the particular view of authority to which one subjects the Bible. What happened in the evangelical debate is that **the detailed inerrancy position became a test of orthodoxy among conservative evangelicals.**" [John Perry, "Dissolving the Inerrancy Debate: How Modern Philosophy Shaped the Evangelical View of Scripture," Quodlibet Journal: Volume 3, Number 4, Fall 2001]

19. W. Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 3, p. 33 emphasis added. The quote in context reads: "The whole Scripture was written under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, but **not every word in the Bible is the word of God.**" See also Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, (1995) Message 7, p. 89 where W. Lee says: "Satan's word is recorded in the Bible, and that record is by the inspiration of the Spirit, **but the word recorded is not the word of God.** The serpent said, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?...Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:1b, 4-5). This is Satan's word, but it is recorded by Moses as a part of the Holy Scripture. This shows that **not every word recorded in the Bible is the word of God**, but the record is by the inspiration of the Spirit." [Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, p. 89] Contrast this 1995 statement—"not every word recorded in the Bible is the word of God"-- with W. Lee's earlier (1971) affirmation--"The Bible is the Word of God. We believe that the Bible, word by word, is divinely inspired by God (2 Pet. 1:21), as the breath of God (2 Tim. 3:16)...**We must believe that the Bible is God's infallible Word.**" [W. Lee, *The Speciality, Generality & Practicality...* Chp. 1] and his (1978) statement that "The whole Bible is the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16). Do not take any word other than the Bible as the Word of God...**Whatever is in the Bible, you may rest assured, is the Word of God.**" [W. Lee, *Life Messages*, message #24, p. 216 message given Nov. 11, 1978, in Spokane WA, USA]
20. Witness Lee, *On Knowing the Bible*, chp.4, emphasis added. Messages given in Taipei, Taiwan in the 1950s (translated). A further principle W. Lee taught was distinguishing between dispensations. He said "We have to differentiate the ages; that is, we have to know clearly to which dispensation a word belongs. If you are not in a certain dispensation, then the words for that dispensation have nothing to do with you." [Witness Lee, *On Knowing the Bible*, chp.4]
21. W. Lee, *Life Messages*, #24, p. 216. Message given Nov. 11, 1978, Spokane WA, USA
22. W. Lee, *Life Messages*, #24, p. 216 (selected statements from the paragraph above (see note 21).
23. W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, Message 14, p. 127
24. W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, Message 14, pp. 127-8
25. W. Lee, *Life-study of James* p. 132
26. Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, p. 78 & p. 88
27. Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, pp. 88-89 (see also p. 78-9)
28. Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, p. 89 The statement in context reads: "Genesis 3:1b, 4-5 is the word spoken by the old serpent, the devil, but recorded by Moses through the inspiration of the Spirit of God for God's purpose to expose His enemy Satan's subtle deceiving and his devilish temptation that mankind may know that Satan is a real deceiver and devilish tempter (1 Tim. 2:14; Matt. 4:1-3; 6:13; 1 Thes. 3:5). Satan's word is recorded in the Bible, and that record is by the inspiration of the Spirit, **but the word recorded is not the word of God.** The serpent said, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?...Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:1b, 4-5). This is Satan's word, but it is recorded by Moses as a part of the Holy Scripture. This shows that **not every word recorded in the Bible is the word of God, but the record is by the inspiration of the Spirit.**" [Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, p. 89] The phrase quoted in the text is highlighted.
29. Perhaps we should qualify this statement: "never before (at least, according to my knowledge) had W. Lee clearly differentiated between God-inspired Scripture and the word of God." We are thinking particularly about local church members in North America who heard W. Lee expound the New Testament systematically through his semi-annual *Life-study* trainings.
30. Footnote 5 on Matt. 4:4, Rcv.
31. W. Lee, *The Full Knowledge of the Word of God*, p. 16. The quote in context reads: "God's Word is God's breathing out (2 Tim. 3:16). The Bible is God's breathing out; that is, it is the breath breathed out by God."
32. W. Lee, *Life-study of Colossians*, pp. 245-6 (see also footnote 1, Col. 4:16, Rcv.) In context, the quote reads: "The word of Christ is the word spoken by Christ. In His New Testament economy God speaks in the Son, and the Son **speaks not only directly in the Gospels, but also through His members, the apostles and**

prophets, in Acts, in the Epistles, and in Revelation. All these may be considered His word...[p. 245]

The word of Christ includes the entire New Testament."(p. 246)

33. W. Lee, *Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, Message 43, p. 378-9, emphasis added. The quote in context reads: "The apostles' teaching in the New Testament is altogether based on the principle of incarnation. According to this principle, God speaks in man's speaking....This is the reason the writings of Peter, John, and Paul recorded in the Bible could become God's words. Furthermore, these words are among the contents of the New Testament." This view is confirmed by W. Lee's teaching, "Surely the Lord's speaking in the four Gospels was God's speaking. However, we may think that it is wrong to say that the apostles' speaking...also is God's speaking. According to Hebrews 1:2, today God speaks in the Son...**Because all the apostles are sons of God...their speaking for God is also God's speaking...Hence all the speakings by the apostles are God's speaking.**" [W. Lee, *The Ministry of the New Testament & the Teaching...of the Apostles*, p. 20, emphasis added] Notice there is an important distinction between how God speaks in the New Testament (the "principle of incarnation") and in the Old Testament. In this article (for the sake of brevity) we focus on the New Testament.
34. W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, Message 14, p. 128
35. W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, Message 14, p. 128 These phrases appear in the context of W. Lee saying, "Instead of being the word of God, many of the words spoken by Job and his friends were **merely human**. Furthermore, in the Psalms certain words are merely **the utterances of men**, whereas others are truly the word of God." (W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, Message 14, p. 128, emphasis added)
36. W. Lee, *Life-study of James* p. 132
37. W. Lee, *Life-study of James* p. 75
38. Entry under the Question: "What does it mean that the Bible is inspired?" From: <http://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-inspired.html>
39. Entry under the Question: "What does it mean that the Bible is inspired?" From: <http://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-inspired.html>
40. See James D. G. Dunn, *The Living Word*, p. 95 for a discussion. Prof. Dunn quotes Leon Morris concerning the verse John 10:35 "The Scripture cannot be broken." Morris says, "The term 'broken' is not defined...But it is perfectly intelligible. It means that Scripture cannot be emptied of its force..." Dunn says "The first half of Morris' last sentence catches the sense well ('Scripture cannot be emptied of its force')..." [James D. G. Dunn, *The Living Word*, p. 95]
41. W. Nee, *The Ministry of God's Word*, Collected Works, Vol. 53, p. 16. The quote in context reads: "the basic principle of God's speaking is...that God's word has been seasoned with man's flavor. However, it is preserved as His pure word. It is truly man's word and at the same time truly God's word. It is genuinely God's word and at the same time genuinely man's word...It is man speaking, yet God recognizes it as His word." In his *Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, W. Lee gives a similar definition, saying, "The New Testament principle of incarnation, that is, God and man, man and God, becoming one...In the New Testament the Lord becomes one with His apostles and they become one with Him. **Both speak together. His word becomes their word, and whatever they utter is His word.**" [W. Lee, *Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, Message 43, p.383, emphasis added.]
42. W. Nee, *The Ministry of God's Word*, Collected Works, Vol. 53, p. 17. Watchman Nee's phrase, "many servants of the Lord," should include the apostle James, who introduces himself as "James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." (James 1:1). Witness Lee expressed the same idea as W. Nee in his *Life-study of 1 Cor.* saying "The apostles' teaching in the New Testament is altogether based on the principle of incarnation...God speaks in man's speaking...On the day of Pentecost the apostles and disciples also began to speak according to the principle of incarnation. This is the reason **the writings of Peter, John, and Paul recorded in the Bible could become God's words**. Furthermore, these words are among **the contents of the New Testament**. Although Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 7 that certain things he says are not the Lord's word or the Lord's commandment, **everything spoken by Paul in this chapter has nonetheless become part of the divine revelation in the New Testament**. This is because Paul was a person absolutely one with God. Even when he says that he does not have a word from the Lord, the Lord speaks in his speaking." [W. Lee, *Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, Message 43, pp.378-9, emphasis added.] Moreover, under the heading: "The Apostle's Teaching Becoming the Word of God in the New Testament," W. Lee says, "**Whatever the apostle [Paul] teaches**, regardless in what way, **becomes the word of God in the New Testament.**" [W. Lee, *Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, Message 43, p. 383, emphasis added.] W. Nee makes the important point that God's way of speaking in the New Testament (the "principle of incarnation") is significantly different from in the Old Testament. E.g., W. Nee says, "There are two kinds of ministers of the word. In the Old Testament there is one kind and in the New Testament there is another." W. Nee, *The Ministry of God's Word*, Collected Works, Vol. 53, p. 47] In this article (for the sake of brevity) we focus on the New Testament.
43. W. Nee, *The Ministry of God's Word*, Collected Works, Vol. 53, p. 20
44. W. Nee, *The Ministry of God's Word*, Collected Works, Vol. 53, p. 15, emphasis added
45. W. Nee, *The Ministry of God's Word*, Collected Works, Vol. 53, pp. 36-7
46. W. Nee, *The Ministry of God's Word*, Collected Works, Vol. 53, p. 55. W. Lee expresses the same idea, saying "The New Testament principle of incarnation, that is, God and man, man and God, becoming one...In the New Testament the Lord becomes one with His apostles and they become one with Him. **Both speak together. His**

- word becomes their word, and whatever they utter is His word.** Hence, the apostle's charge is the Lord's charge (v. 10). **What he says**, though not by the Lord, **still becomes a part of** the divine revelation in **the New Testament** (v. 12)." [W. Lee, *Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, Message 43, p.383, emphasis added.]
47. "The Highest Point in the Ministry of the Word," is the title of Chapter Four of Watchman Nee's *Ministry of God's Word*, *Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Vol. 53, pp. 47-60. This chapter is an exposition on Paul's example in 1 Corinthians chapter seven.
48. W. Lee, *Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, Message 43, p. 379. The quote in context reads: "Although Paul writes in 1 Cor. 7 that certain things he says are not the Lord's word or the Lord's commandment, **everything spoken by Paul in this chapter has nonetheless become part of** the divine revelation in **the New Testament.**"
49. W. Lee, *Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, Message 43, p. 383, and footnote 2 to 1 Cor. 7:40 Rcv. emphasis added. The quote in context reads: "In the New Testament the Lord becomes one with His apostles, and they become one with Him; thus the two speak together (Rcv footnote). [*Life-study*: "Both speak together"] His word becomes their word, and whatever they utter is His word. Hence, the apostle's charge was the Lord's charge (v. 10). **What he [Paul] said**, though it was not spoken by the Lord, still **became part of** the divine revelation in **the New Testament.**" [footnote 2 to 1 Cor. 7:40 Rcv, emphasis added]
50. W. Lee, *The Ministry of the New Testament & the Teaching...of the Apostles*, p. 20 The quote in context reads, "Surely the Lord's speaking in the four Gospels was God's speaking. However, we may think that it is wrong to say that the apostles' speaking...also is God's speaking. According to Hebrews 1:2, today God speaks in the Son...**Because all the apostles are sons of God...their speaking for God is also God's speaking... Hence all the speakings by the apostles are God's speaking.**" [W. Lee, *The Ministry of the New Testament & the Teaching...of the Apostles*, p. 20] The wider context concerns W. Lee's definition of "the Apostles' Teaching"-- "We need to consider the entire New Testament, from the first word of Matthew to the last word of Revelation, as God's speaking through the different mouths and hands of the apostles. This is the apostles' teaching." [W. Lee, *The Ministry of the New Testament & the Teaching...of the Apostles*, p. 22]
51. Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, p. 89 The quote in context reads: "Satan's word is recorded in the Bible...by the inspiration of the Spirit, but the word recorded is not the word of God...This shows that not every word recorded in the Bible is the word of God."
52. Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, p. 89-90. Elsewhere W. Lee describes the dialogue between Job and his "comforters" as "very much according to their concepts...which contradict God's purpose in man." [W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, Message 14, p. 128]
53. Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, p. 91. This is a further development of W. Lee's earlier teaching regarding Psalms, that "part of the Psalms are of the human concept, and part are of the divine concept; part are the expression of the godly saints, and part are the declarations of God." [W. Lee, *Christ & the Church in the Psalms*, p. 16]. Therefore (W. Lee declares) "we must put Psalm 2 upon our head and Psalm 1 under our feet. How can we put part of the Bible under our feet? This is not my thought, but the thought of the Bible itself." [W. Lee, *Christ & the Church in the Psalms*, p. 22]
54. Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, p. 91 Peter is roundly condemned by W. Lee, who says, "Peter's intention in speaking this word [Matt. 16:22] was to frustrate the Lord from going to the cross to accomplish His death and resurrection for the accomplishment of God's eternal redemption and His dynamic salvation" [W. Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, p. 92] This critique retroactively attributes to Peter [in Matt. 16] the foresight that Christ's impending death would be followed by resurrection and that Christ's death was "for the accomplishment of God's eternal redemption and His dynamic salvation." Most Bible expositors refrain from attributing such marvelous foresight to Peter! Hindsight is always 20/20!
55. Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, p. 93 The quote in context reads: "these illustrations show that in the Bible, which is a book of God's inspiration, a number of words are not by God but by man and even by God's enemy, Satan."
56. "Satan's word is recorded in the Bible...by the inspiration of the Spirit, but the word recorded is not the word of God...This shows that not every word recorded in the Bible is the word of God." [W. Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, p. 89] Also Satan's speaking is used as the prime example in W. Lee's *Life-study of James*. He says, "although every line and word of the Scripture is inspired by God, **this does not mean that every word in this holy Book is the word of God**, but we must be very careful in our understanding of this matter. **In the Bible there are a great many words that are not God's words. We may give several examples to make this matter clear. In Genesis 3:1, 3-5 we have words spoken by the serpent.** First the serpent asked the woman, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (v. 1). Then the serpent went on to say, "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (vv. 4-5). These words spoken by the serpent are actually words uttered by the Devil, Satan." [W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, Message 14, pp. 127-8, emphasis added]
57. Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, p. 84 & p. 96
58. LSM's *Affirmation & Critique*, Vol. IV, No. 3 (July 1999) p. 64 refers to, "The economy of God, **the hermeneutic key to the entire Bible.**" It also says: "God's economy is the key to the Bible...the central hermeneutical principle...the central line of the divine revelation..." We note that, in presenting their "central

hermeneutical principle...the central line of the divine revelation," LSM's *Affirmation & Critique* **makes no assertion** that any Scripture deemed inconsistent with their "central line" is not God's word. When presenting their doctrines to a theologically-informed audience, LSM **does not mention** that, according to LSM's bibliology "**not every word in the Bible is the word of God.**" This raises the question—is LSM's teaching that "not every word in the Bible is the word of God," intended for "internal consumption only" (i.e. within the 'Lord's Recovery among LSM's local churches)?

59. Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, p. 84 & p. 96. LSM's "blended brothers" adopt the same attitude: "We have one unique teaching, and **there is one unique teaching in the Bible**—the teaching of God's eternal economy." [EM, *The Ministry*, Vol. 10, No. 6 (September, 2006) p. 19, emphasis added]
60. [W. Lee, *The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ*, (1994) chapter 2, emphasis added] The statement reads "...**there is a line concerning the economy of God recorded in the Scriptures showing us how God became man to make man God.**" (see the quote in context below) Under the Heading: "GOD BECAME MAN THAT MAN MAY BECOME GOD" BEING THE ESSENCE OF THE ENTIRE BIBLE, W. Lee, quoting the saying of the "Church Father," Athanasius (c. A.D. 297 - 373), says, "**'God became man that man may become God' in the economy of God....Strictly speaking, these words are the essence of the entire Bible.**" [W. Lee, *The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ*, (1994) chapter 2, emphasis added] Later in the same chapter, he says, "**'God becoming man and man becoming God' is the economy of God;** it is beyond the comprehension of angels and men. This is the point that I want to cover tonight. The Scriptures tell us clearly that God became a man to be our Savior and then He redeemed and regenerated us. Orthodox Christians and fundamental teachers all have seen these truths. However, they do not see that **there is a line concerning the economy of God recorded in the Scriptures showing us how God became man to make man God.** The Bible shows us how man can become God to have a God-man living and thus become an organism of God, which is the Body of Christ. This is something that they do not see." [W. Lee, *The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ*, (1994) chapter 2, emphasis added] The highlighted statement (above) is quoted in the main text.
61. Luther used the phrase—"A *Right Strawy Epistle*" in the 1st edition of his German New Testament. However, "after 1522 Luther withdrew his characterization of James as a "right strawy epistle" from subsequent editions of his New Testament." See Timothy George, [Dean of Beeson Divinity School of Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama, USA.] "*A Right Strawy Epistle: Reformation Perspectives on James*" in *Review and Expositor* Vol. 83 (Summer 1986) pp. 369-382. The implication of Luther's phrase, "A *Right Strawy Epistle*" was that James ought to be burned (1 Cor. 3). Prof. George indicates that, despite his critique of James, "Luther did not, as is commonly repeated, excise James completely from the canon. He included James in all of the editions of his German New Testament, although he did detach it from the usual order and placed it, along with Hebrews, Jude, and the Apocalypse, at the end of the Bible." (pdf. p. 23) Other reformers (e.g. Calvin & Zwingli) sought to reconcile James' view of faith & works with Paul's view. Luther's drastic actions and style of rhetoric characterized 16th-century Reformation debates; it does not belong in 20th or 21st century Bible exposition. Watchman Nee discusses the "Relationship between Faith & Work in James 2" in *Collected Works* Vol. 28, chapter 10, pp. 187-205
62. Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 1, p 14. The quote in context reads: "**I do not believe that James knew anything about God's eternal economy.** He knew only how to be pious, how to be godly, how to fear God, how to behave righteously, how to be perfect, and how to be upright. **He did not mention anything to give even a hint that he knew the eternal economy of God.**" [Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 1, p. 14, emphasis added] Also W. Lee says, "James was very much devoid of God' eternal purpose and His ultimate goal." (p. 40) "James was devoid of the visions of God's high revelation." (p. 47) and "The book of James is devoid of the main items in the New Testament." (p. 61) The second phrase—"surely not the words of God"—quoted in the text occurs on p. 83 & p. 95 (see below for the context). Notice that W. Lee's *Crystallization Study of James* forms part of the "High Peak" Books (1992-7), along with his *The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ* quoted in the previous footnote. Hence the definition of Scripture's "central line" and "God's eternal economy"-- "**'God becoming man and man becoming God' is the economy of God**"-- are relevant to W. Lee's evaluation of James' Epistle. Please see *Appendix A* for more discussion of James.
63. W. Lee finds James "devoid of God' eternal purpose and His ultimate goal." (W. Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, p. 40) "James was devoid of the visions of God's high revelation." (W. Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, p. 47) and "The book of James is devoid of the main items in the New Testament." (W. Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, p. 61)
64. The quotation in the text--"The words in the Epistle of James spoken...according to his Old Testament concept" [are] "surely not the words of God"—is extracted from W. Lee's 97-word sentence quoted below. The highlighted core statements numbered [1], [2] & [3] below have been reordered, while preserving their meaning. W. Lee's statement was: "**The words in the Epistle of James spoken [1]** by him that exalt the Mosaic law and charge the New Testament believers to keep it, that confuse God's dispensation of the ages, and that are devoid of Christ, His death, His resurrection, and the Spirit **are surely not the words of God [3]**, but words spoken by James **according to his Old Testament concept [2]** concerning the Mosaic law which is in contrast to the grace in God's

New Testament economy, and according to his vague vision of the difference between God's Old Testament dispensation and His New Testament dispensation." [W. Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, p. 83 & p. 95] In his *Life-study* W. Lee asserts that (concerning many of James' prescriptions) "**James' word...is not God's word.**" [W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, p. 131] This quote in context reads: "In his Epistle James wrote... concerning many things: visiting widows and orphans, keeping oneself unspotted from the world...fulfilling the perfect law of freedom, saying 'If the Lord wills'...pray[ing] according to [Elijah's] example...**James' word** regarding these things may be godly, **but it is not God's word.**" [W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, p. 131, emphasis added]

65. In his *Life-study*, W. Lee says, "In his epistle James wrote in a godly way **concerning many things**: visiting widows and orphans, keeping oneself unspotted from the world, fulfilling the perfect law of freedom, and saying 'If the Lord wills,' concerning the future, encouraging the believers to pray according to the example of Elijah. **James' word regarding these things may be godly, but it is not God's word.** Nevertheless, such a book is included among the holy writings, which were breathed by God, inspired by God." [W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, Message 14, p. 131, emphasis added] The highlighted portions are in the main text.
66. William Kelly (John N. Darby's coworker) comments on Martin Luther's rejection of James: "Even...Luther put a signal slight on the Epistle of James. No argument is needed to prove that he had not one good reason, that his unbelief was quite unjustifiable, and that the error wrought exceeding evil in proportion to the eminence of the man. For the influence of a leader's words, if he go seriously astray, is so much the more dangerous. Hence the Lutheran party in Germany have always shown the strongest tendency towards what some have called "a free handling" of the word of God...Who can wonder that this has at length developed into the various forms of decided rationalism in the present day, though indeed more or less ever since the Reformation? They...cite Luther as giving an anticipative sanction to their own sceptical spirit towards the word of God. The truth is that the value of the books of both James and Jonah is chiefly owing to, and seen in, their peculiarity. **God is not narrow, though man is; and our wisdom lies in being lifted out of our own pettiness into the vast mind of God.**" William Kelly, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets, Jonah*. (emphasis added)
67. In the early 1980s, during his *Life-study* training of James, W. Lee appraised James' epistle as a useful supplement to Paul's epistles. He said, "The epistles of Paul are concerning God's economy...This economy is vital and crucial. But in order to carry out God's economy, we need practical Christian perfection...we should not be careless in our living." [W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, p. 20, emphasis added] W. Lee regarded James' as a needed balance to Paul. "In our Christian life we need to have a balance between practical Christian living and God's New Testament economy," W. Lee said [W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, p. 41, emphasis added]
68. Reported W. Lee's *Crystallization Study of James* was a polemical response to the Church in Anaheim's study of James. During the period (1994-5) the Church in Anaheim (and possibly other local churches in S. California) spent time in James' Epistle. W. Lee's *Crystallization Study* was his polemical reaction and his attempt to correct their *de tour* from the "central lane." Evidently it achieved its intended result--since that time, the author is not aware of any of LSM's local churches focusing on James' Epistle. Readers of the *Crystallization Study of James* would not be surprised by such a report.
69. James D. G. Dunn, *The Living Word*, SCM Press, 1987, p. 109. The statement in context reads: "It is possible for some Christians to take an interpretation of scripture whose hermeneutical justification within scripture is weaker than other interpretations, to exalt it above all other alternative views of scripture and to use it to deny validity to those others, even when they have at least as strong an exegetical base." [James D. G. Dunn, *The Living Word*, SCM Press, 1987, p. 109] Prof. Dunn's statement was made in the context of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. Prof. Dunn also states, "The stronger any claim that the canon as such offers a single unifying pattern, the more sure we can be that it is a pattern abstracted without due regard for a properly historical exegesis or for the diversity of ecclesiastical traditions which all claim authentication from the canon." [James D. G. Dunn, *The Living Word*, SCM Press, 1987, p. 166]
70. Scholars argue that every Christian group or denomination has a "canon within the canon of Scripture." For example, Professor James D. G. Dunn says, "The reality is that *all Christians have operated with a canon within the canon.*" [James D. G. Dunn, *Unity & Diversity in the New Testament*, (2nd Edition) p. 374, emphasis original] He also says, "Like it or not, then, all Christians have operated and continue to operate with a canon within the New Testament canon." [James D. G. Dunn, *Unity & Diversity*, (2nd Edition) p. 375]
71. On occasion W. Lee equated the "Lord's Recovery" to the Body of Christ. For example, speaking in Taipei, Taiwan, W. Lee said, we should "allow God to have the Body of Christ on the earth. From now on, not only are we who are in Taipei in one accord, but **the entire recovery of the Lord in the whole universe is also one. We are the one Body of Christ.**" (p. 58) [W. Lee, *Words of Training in the New Way*, vol. 1, pp. 57-8 (Sept. 1987)] LSM "Blended brother," Minoru Chen confirms this equality, saying: "I would say that practically speaking, **for us the Body today is just the Lord's recovery.** ...In Brother Lee's understanding, **the Body equals the recovery.** We know that the mystical Body of Christ includes all the believers, all of the redeemed ones in time and in space, but **practically for us today, the recovery is the Body.**" [MC., *The Ministry*, v. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 196] LSM President, Benson Phillips is also on record saying, "Surely we have seen that **when a brother leaves the church life** his situation tends to worsen. This occurs because he has become an individual again. **He is no longer a part of the Body.**" [BP, *The Ministry*, vol. 9, No. 3, March 2005, p. 130]

72. This matches Watchman Nee's statements: "**Whatever the Bible has, we must stand on the positive side.** For whatever matter the Bible allows both sides, we must stand on both sides. And **whatever the Bible does not have we must reject...**With whatever the Bible allows people freedom, we also should allow people freedom..." (Watchman Nee, *Further Talks on the Church Life*, p. 64) "**Whatever the Bible does not have, the church must by all means reject.** Otherwise, all those who follow the Lord faithfully will leave when they see the church having what the Bible has not." (Watchman Nee, *Further Talks on the Church Life*, p. 64, emphasis added)
73. W. Lee, *Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, Message 43, p.383, emphasis added. W. Lee makes this comment in the context of 1 Cor. 7. However, that section is particularly relevant to the present discussion in that it highlights the distinction between the Lord's command, Paul's instruction and Paul's personal opinion (i.e. man's word). In W. Lee's treatment of Paul's word in 1 Cor. the principle of incarnation—man's word becoming God's word—is invoked. In his treatment of James' word in the Epistle of James, however, a different principle is invoked—dividing Scripture into two distinct categories--God's word and man's word!
74. See for example, Virgil V. Porter Jr. "THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT IN THE BOOK OF JAMES," *BIBLIOTHECA SACRA* Vol. 162 (October-December, 2005): pp. 470-82. An obvious example is James 5:12 which echoes Matt. 5:34-36.
75. Examples are: "The Bible is a wonderful book. It is "The Book" among all books! It took 1600 years to complete, starting with Moses, the greatest prophet of God, and ending with the Apostle John. **It was confirmed 300 years later (397 A.D.) at a council held at Carthage in North Africa.**" [Witness Lee, *Life-study of Genesis*, Message 1, emphasis added] "After the apostles passed away, there was some confusion due to the fact that some people wrote books in the names of the apostles. Therefore the leaders of the early churches, the so-called [Church] Fathers, collected all the books written by the apostles and put them together with the Gospels. Not long after Polycarp was martyred, the New Testament was viewed basically the same way among all the different churches. However, there were still disagreements as to whether or not the seven books of Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation should be included. Since these books were truly inspired by the Holy Spirit and have spiritual authority and value, after a long time of testing, in a council of the leaders of all the churches, these seven books were acknowledged to be part of the New Testament in A.D. 397, at Carthage in North Africa. **The New Testament was recognized as having the same twenty-seven books as we have it today. Hence, by A.D. 397 at the Council at Carthage, the whole Bible, including both the Old and the New Testament, was recognized and acknowledged by God's people.**" [Witness Lee, *On Knowing the Bible*, chp.2, emphasis added.] W. Lee also describes the process of canonization, saying, "Probably many early disciples wrote different gospels—not only four. The four gospels were selected from many, perhaps from over 100 biographies written by the early disciples. History tells us that there were a lot of writing by the early disciples, besides what was collected into the New Testament. **Since most of them were not so accurate, not many of them were selected....seven books...were not selected until 397, in the council of Carthage, North Africa.** That final selection completed the entire New Testament. Those many books written by the apostles were full of the word of Christ." [W. Lee, *The Divine Speaking*, p. 48, emphasis added]
76. James D. G. Dunn, *Unity & Diversity in the New Testament*, (2nd Edition) p. 386
77. Of course this is Watchman Nee's famous statement on the primacy of Scripture: "The Bible is our only standard. We are not afraid to preach the pure Word of the Bible, even if men oppose; **but if it is not the Word of the Bible, we could never agree** even if everyone approved of it." (Watchman Nee, *Collected Works*, Vol. #7, p. 1231) Other statements by W. Nee include: "**Whatever the Bible does not have, the church must by all means reject.** Otherwise, all those who follow the Lord faithfully will leave when they see the church having what the Bible has not." (Watchman Nee, *Further Talks on the Church Life*, p. 64) "Whatever the Bible has, we must stand on the positive side. For whatever matter the Bible allows both sides, we must stand on both sides. And **whatever the Bible does not have we must reject...**With whatever the Bible allows people freedom, we also should allow people freedom..." (Watchman Nee, *Further Talks on the Church Life*, p. 64)
78. James D. G. Dunn, *Unity & Diversity in the New Testament*, (2nd Edition) p. 377, emphasis original.
79. James Dunn, *Unity & Diversity in the New Testament*, (2nd Edition,) Foreword, p. xxxi
80. The schizophrenia inherent in LSM's attitude towards the Bible is reflected in their teaching concerning "pray-reading," which recognizes that **every** Scripture is God-breathed and profitable (2 Tim. 3:16). For example, one of LSM's "blended brothers" says, "In Matt. 4:4 the Lord said, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God.' The first time I heard about pray-reading, my wife and I and a newly saved couple decided to try it together. We simply opened the Bible, and the verses before us were Proverbs 30:24-28, which talk about ants, rock badgers, locusts and lizards...we simply began [to pray-read]." [DT, *The Ministry*, Vol. 8, No. 7 (July/Aug. 2004) p. 275] The "blended brother's" point is that **any and every Scripture can be used for "pray-reading" because it all God's word**—"every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God." (Matt 4:4). LSM's "blended brothers" do **not** direct believers to discern which part of Scripture is "God's word" (as opposed to man's word) and to "pray-read" those portions.

81. LSM's affiliate, "Defense & Confirmation Project" (DCP) published a 28-book "Attack Pack" in May 2007. These publications were recommended by LSM's "blended brothers" and distributed at LSM's conference in St. Paul MN. An earlier LSM-publication in the same *genre* was "*The Fermentation of the Present Rebellion*" published in W. Lee's name.
82. This phrase--"High Peak of the Divine Revelation"--was used by W. Lee & LSM's "blended brothers" to designate W. Lee's messages from 1994 until his passing in 1997. For example LSM's Senior Editor, Ron Kangas explains "**From 1994 until early 1997** the vision of the age reached a phenomenal development, which is the reason we call it **the high peak**, even the highest peak, **of the divine revelation.**" [RK, *The Ministry*, Vol. 9, No. 8, Sept. 2005, p. 12]. Moreover, LSM's Ron Kangas also says, "**By 1994 the ministry** in the Lord's recovery **had brought the recovery into a new realm, a new stage, and a new culture with a new language.**" [RK, *The Ministry*, vol. 9, No. 5, May, 2005, p. 51] In the teaching of LSM's "blended brothers" and in the concept of typical LSM-local church members the "High Peak truths" supersede W. Lee's prior teachings.
83. This saying about the "Diamond in the box of the Bible" has been quoted by LSM's "blended brothers" on several occasions. For example, LSM's Senior Editor, Ron Kangas: "*The high peak of the divine revelation—the 'diamond' in the 'box' of the Bible—is the revelation that in Christ God has become man in order that man might become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead.*" [RK, *The Ministry*, vol. 9, No. 8, Sept. 2005, p. 23, also on p. 36] Also LSM's Senior Editor, Ed Marks, "*The 'diamond' in the 'box' of the Bible is the revelation that in Christ God has become man in order that man might become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead (2 Sam.7:12-14a)*" [EM, *The Ministry*, Vol. 10, No. 1, (Jan./Feb. 2006) p. 301
84. Entry under: "Living Stream Ministry & The Local Church: Background Information--Description of The Local Church and Living Stream Ministry" posted on the LSM-DCP "ContendingForTheFaith Internet website at: <http://www.contendingforthefait.com/libellitigations/harvest-house-et-al/ministry.html>
85. W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, Message 14, p. 132, emphasis added. The statement in context reads: "We do not have the slightest doubt about the divine inspiration of the Bible. On the contrary, we have proper understanding concerning the inspiration of the Scriptures. **We believe that the entire Bible, every word in the Scripture, is God-breathed. Nevertheless, not every word in the Bible is the word of God.** As we have seen, many words recorded in the Scriptures are the words of Satan, evil men, God's opposers, and even the nonsensical talk of godly men." [W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, Message 14, p. 132. The highlighted words appear in the main text.] A similar statement by W. Lee is: "Although every line and word of the Scripture is inspired by God, **this does not mean that every word in this holy Book is the word of God.**...In the Bible there are a great many words that are not God's words." [W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, Message 14, p. 127, emphasis added]. An equivalent statement appears in W. Lee's 1995 *Crystallization-study*, which says, "The entire Scripture is written by inspiration of the Spirit of God, but **this does not mean that every word** written through the Spirit of God as a portion **of the Holy Scripture is the word of God.** Many portions of the Holy Scripture are rather the words spoken by persons...other than God." [W. Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, p. 78 & p. 88]
86. Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*. Ryrie explains why these different adjectives are used: "These differences call for precision in stating the biblical doctrine. [1] Formerly all that was necessary to affirm one's belief in full inspiration was the statement, "I believe in the inspiration of the Bible." [2] But when some did not extend inspiration to the words of the text it became necessary to say, "I believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible." [3] To counter the teaching that not all parts of the Bible were inspired, one had to say, "I believe in the verbal, plenary [definition: full; complete; entire; absolute; unqualified] inspiration of the Bible." [4] Then because some did not want to ascribe total accuracy to the Bible, it was necessary to say, "I believe in the verbal, plenary, infallible, inerrant inspiration of the Bible." [5] But then "infallible" and "inerrant" began to be limited to matters of faith only rather than also embracing all that the Bible records (including historical facts, genealogies, accounts of Creation, etc.), so it became necessary to add the concept of "unlimited inerrancy." Each addition to the basic statement arose because of an erroneous teaching." [From Charles C. Ryrie's *Basic Theology*] Note: According to my knowledge, W. Lee & LSM don't use the term "inerrant." They only use the term "infallible."

APPENDIX A: LSM's DEPRECIATION OF JAMES

James' Practical Christian Living Balancing Paul's Economy of God

In the early 1980s, during his *Life-study* training of James, W. Lee appraised James' epistle as a useful supplement to Paul's epistles. He said,⁸⁷ "The epistles of Paul are concerning God's economy...This economy is vital and crucial. But in order to carry out God's economy, we need practical Christian perfection...we should not be careless in our living." W. Lee regarded James' as a needed balance to Paul. "In our Christian life we need to have a balance between practical Christian living and God's New Testament economy," W. Lee said.⁸⁸ Measured in terms of Paul's theology, James falls short. Nevertheless, W. Lee acknowledged James has some⁸⁹ "positive matters concerning God's New Testament economy."

However, applying his hermeneutic that “not every word in the Bible is God’s word,” W. Lee’s *Life-study* simultaneously depreciates parts of James’ epistle. He said,⁹⁰ “In the Epistle of James certain words were not spoken by God, on the contrary words such as ‘twelve tribes’ and ‘synagogue’ were spoken by James, but recorded by God’s inspiration.” Moreover,⁹¹ “In his Epistle James wrote...concerning many things: visiting widows and orphans, keeping oneself unspotted from the world...[etc]... James’ word regarding these things may be godly, but it is not God’s word.” Obviously W. Lee was not enthusiastic about James’ epistle; he asserted that parts are “James word...not God’s word.” Nevertheless overall W. Lee’s *Life-study* found some value, certain “New Testament characteristics” and some words of God in James’ Epistle. However, a decade later, his assessment was decidedly more negative.

LSM’s Denigration of James:

“Genuine Christian Perfection is for Building the Body, Not loving our Neighbors, Helping Orphans and Widows”—W. Lee

In W. Lee’s 1995 polemical *Crystallization-study*, James is roundly condemned for his ignorance of God’s economy. W. Lee declares,⁹² “I do not believe that James knew anything about God’s eternal economy. He knew only how to be pious, how to be godly...He did not...give even a hint that he knew the eternal economy of God.” Moreover,⁹³ “James was very much devoid of God’ eternal purpose and His ultimate goal,” “devoid of the visions of God’s high revelation” and “devoid of the main items in the New Testament.” Previously James was interpreted in the light of the New Testament. For example, James says the believers were “brought forth by the word of truth” (1:18). The *Life-study* and Recovery Version footnotes say, concerning the “word of truth,”⁹⁴— “The word of the divine reality, of what the Triune God is. This word is the seed of life, by which we have been regenerated (1 Pet. 1:23).” Hence James 1:18 is interpreted according to Peter’s statement that we are “regenerated...through the living and abiding word of God.” However, W. Lee’s later *Crystallization-study* gives a totally different interpretation. Witness Lee now equates James’ “word of truth” with the Mosaic law; he asserts that⁹⁵ “James said that God regenerated us with the word of the law.” Why the drastic change in interpretation?

In W. Lee’s earlier *Life-study*, James’ practical Christian living was appraised as a needed balance to Paul’s emphasis on God’s economy. Now, such balance is not necessary. Not only is God’s economy the “central line of the entire Scripture,” evidently it is the only acceptable line. In their view, this “major” cannot be combined with any other “minor;” LSM’s “central line” must have a monopoly on Scriptural interpretation! Based on this judgment, W. Lee effectively rejects James’ epistle as God’s word; he says⁹⁶ “The words in the Epistle of James spoken...according to his Old Testament concept” [are] “surely not the words of God.” Evidently nothing good can come from James; W. Lee’s denigration is total and complete. He considers James’ epistle a “tragic mistake;” it is a hindrance, not a help. He says,⁹⁷ “Thousands and thousands of real believers have been blinded by James’s vague teaching from seeing the clear view concerning the economy of God.”

W. Lee denigrates James’ admonition to visit orphans and widows (James 1:27). He says,⁹⁸ “genuine Christian perfection is for the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12). It is not for us to love our neighbors, to help the needy orphans and widows...That is James’s perfection.” Yet many would ask—isn’t this a false dichotomy between “building Christ’s Body” and Christian good works? Why can’t believers do both? Why does “building the Body” preclude visiting orphans and widows? Indeed, doesn’t this critique risk falling into the very pitfall James warned against—substituting an ethereal, “building the Body” (faith without works) for practical good works which express genuine faith (James 2:14-18)? In contrast to W. Lee, Watchman Nee did not disparage caring for the poor; rather he taught that,⁹⁹ “Helping the poor is a principle as well as a requirement in the Bible. The Lord always cares for the poor.”

What is James’ *Raison D’état*?

“God inspired James to write the Epistle...to expose James’s Mistake”—W. Lee

Doesn’t LSM’s negative attitude towards James contradict the view that “all Scripture (including James) is profitable”? (2 Tim. 3:16) Indeed LSM’s *Truth Lessons* state that James was among the

books¹⁰⁰ “definitely written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, possessing divine authority and value,” which were therefore “recognized...as a part of the New Testament.” Since LSM now asserts the “tragic issue of James’s mistake is the blinding of thousands of believers,” isn’t James’ Epistle essentially “unprofitable,” and *without* “divine authority and value”? If LSM’s view is correct, why did God inspire James to write his epistle? What is James’ *raison d’état*? Why did God’s sovereignty include James’ epistle in the New Testament canon? W. Lee’s answer is—to expose James’ mistake! He asserts¹⁰¹ “God inspired James to write the Epistle of James with a purpose...to [expose James’s mistake](#),” and “The purpose of God in having James as a book in His holy Scriptures...is just to expose James.” In his view,¹⁰² “James’s defective words” were recorded “for the divine purpose to expose him in his wrong concept concerning the law and in his vague vision concerning God’s dispensation.” Yet, this response raises more questions than it answers—many “mistaken writings” (e.g. the Gospel of Thomas, the Acts of Barnabas) which circulated during the “apostolic era” were not included in the New Testament; why was James’ Epistle the only “mistaken writing” included in the New Testament canon?

LSM’s argument doesn’t add up; God’s (alleged) goal in including James’ epistle was to “expose James’s mistake.” Yet W. Lee admits that “thousands and thousands of real believers have been blinded by James’s” writing. Are we to conclude that God failed abysmally to achieve His goal with respect to James’ epistle? So, why did God do such a “poor job” in “exposing James’s mistake”? This argument is not convincing. It violates the principle¹⁰³ “[Scripture is to be interpreted according to its natural sense](#), unless the context of the passage dictates otherwise.” There is nothing within James’ Epistle suggesting “the divine purpose [was] to expose him in his wrong concept.” Hence LSM’s interpretation of James’ *raison d’état* contradicts the natural sense as understood by Bible scholars and Christian readers. LSM’s rationale for James’ inclusion in the canon leaves readers with the impression that God misled believers by including James’ (alleged) “mistaken writings” in the New Testament. What kind of motives does LSM’s argument implicitly attribute to God?

Nor is James an isolated example, LSM also discounts most of Job and many of the Psalms as mere expressions of the writers’ “natural sentiment.” Yet, *if we accept the formation and preservation of the scriptural canon under God’s sovereignty*, we cannot reject any of the writings found in the canon of Scripture. God is His sovereignty included James’ writing in the New Testament canon. This fact implies that James’ epistle is an acceptable expression of the Christian Faith. [Its canonical status means the Christian life and church-life depicted by James is a valid form of Christianity](#) (despite its Old Covenant Judaism). As Professor Dunn says,¹⁰⁴ “all the diversity of the New Testament can claim to be justifiable interpretations of the Christ-event—**James as well as Paul**, Revelation as well as the Pastorals.”

NOTES to APPENDIX A

87. W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, p. 20

88. W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, p. 41

89. W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, p. 65. He writes, “James says that we have been begotten by the Father of lights by the word of truth (1:17-18). This is New Testament regeneration. James also speaks of receiving with meekness the implanted word (1:21). This is also a New Testament matter.” (W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, p. 65) He refers to these as “positive matters concerning God’s New Testament economy” (W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, p. 65), In context he says “However, along with these positive matters concerning God’s New Testament economy, James brings in things of the Old Testament.” In another place, W. Lee asks, “What does James say in his Epistle concerning God’s New Testament economy?” (W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, p. 40) He answers: “James emphasizes, as New Testament characteristics, only God’s begetting of us (1:18), the perfect law of freedom (1:25), the indwelling Spirit (4:5), and a little regarding the church (5:14).” (W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, p. 40) Nevertheless, according to W. Lee’s *Life-study*, James does exhibit some New Testament characteristics.

90. W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, pp. 75-6

91. W. Lee, *Life-study of James*, p. 131 The quote in context reads: “In his Epistle James wrote... concerning many things: visiting widows and orphans, keeping oneself unspotted from the world...fulfilling the perfect law of freedom, saying ‘If the Lord wills’...pray[ing] according to [Elijah’s] example...**James’ word** regarding these things may be godly, **but it is not God’s word.**”

92. Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 1, p. 14 The quote in context reads: "I do not believe that James knew anything about God's eternal economy. He knew only how to be pious, how to be godly, how to fear God, how to behave righteously...He did not...give even a hint that he knew the eternal economy of God."
93. Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, W. Lee makes the following statements: "James was very much devoid of God' eternal purpose and His ultimate goal." (p. 40) "James was devoid of the visions of God's high revelation." (p. 47) and "The book of James is devoid of the main items in the New Testament." (p. 61) The last statement, in context reads: "The New Testament is composed of mainly nine items. These items are the economy of God..., the all-inclusive God..., the all-inclusive Christ..., the all-inclusive Spirit..., the divine life..., Christ's death..., Christ's resurrection..., and the Body of Christ...The book of James touches only two of the above items: the begetting Father and the indwelling Spirit. But even these items are spoken of by James in an inadequate way. Thus, [the book of James is devoid of the main items in the New Testament.](#)" [W. Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 5, p. 61]
94. James 1:18 footnote 2, Rcv.
95. W. Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 3, p. 31. Along the same lines, "the implanted word" in James 1:21—"receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls" (1:21)—is also equated with Moses' law. W. Lee says, "The implanted word here also refers to the Mosaic law...all the different terms used by James for the law refer to the Mosaic law...the word of truth, and the implanted word refer to the same Mosaic law." [W. Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 3, p. 31] An obvious question is—why does the "word of truth" in James refer to the Mosaic law, while the "word of God" in 1 Peter 1:23 refer to God's "seed of life"? Why is James given an Old Testament interpretation, while Peter is given a New Testament interpretation?
96. W. Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, p. 83 & p. 95
97. Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 6, p. 74
98. W. Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 7, p. 87
99. W. Nee, *Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 61, p. 82
100. W. Lee, *Truth Lessons*, Level 1, Vol. 1, (1985) p. 11. The context of this statement is a description of the formation and recognition of the New Testament canon of Scripture. The *Truth Lessons* say: In the 2nd century "all the churches generally agreed in their view concerning the New Testament except for [the 7 books:] Hebrews, [James](#), 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude and Revelation... Nevertheless, because these seven books [including James] [were definitely written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, possessing divine authority and value](#), after another long period of testing by time, in the year A.D. 397, during the Council of Carthage...the leaders of the churches...[recognized these seven books as a part of the New Testament.](#)" [W. Lee, *Truth Lessons*, Level 1, Vol. 1, (1985) p. 11]
101. W. Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 3, pp. 32-3 The second quote, in context, reads: "In a later message we will see more concerning **the purpose of God in having James as a book in His holy Scriptures**. The purpose of God **is just to expose James.**" (p. 33 highlighted phrases quoted in Appendix A)
102. Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 6. Similarly, W. Lee asserts, the "tragic issue of James's mistake is the blinding of thousands of believers from James's time to today." [Witness Lee, *The Crystallization Study of James*, Message 6]
103. RICHARD J. COLEMAN, "Another View: The Battle for the Bible," *Journal of American Scientific Affiliation (JASA)* vol. 31 (June 1979) pp. 74-79.
104. James D. G. Dunn, *Unity & Diversity*, p. 386