

## WHAT ABOUT STEPHEN? —A COUNTER-EXAMPLE TO LSM'S UNIFORMITY

Twenty years ago the Lord's recovery reached a decisive juncture. Other views exist, but the most plausible retrospective goes something like this: In 1986 Bro. Witness Lee, who had led the recovery first in Taiwan and later in N. America, felt his leadership was being challenged. At a special elders' gathering he declared,<sup>1</sup> "Some may feel...they do not want to see that I am the unique leader to control the entire recovery." He responded by reasserting his leadership, declaring,<sup>2</sup> "my toleration has been terminated" and exhorting the elders to acknowledge<sup>3</sup> "the apostle that all the believers need to recognize as their leader." He called on them to line up in 'one accord' like soldiers in the army with himself as commander-in-chief.<sup>4</sup> Teachings about "one wise master builder"<sup>5</sup> and the "Minister of the Age"<sup>6</sup> were devised as a (tenuous) Scriptural basis for this recognition. These messages were delivered to elders and co-workers in N. America and Taiwan. At the grass roots level, however, most local-church members remained blissfully unaware of these newly-formulated doctrines. His "Minister of the Age" messages remained unpublished (in English) as long as Brother Lee lived. That term was not in the vocabulary of the Lord's recovery. Consequently, for most people, these tenuous teachings remained undetected, like drifting icebergs mostly submerged beneath the ocean of the church-life. Perhaps many leading brothers hoped they would simply melt away with the passage of time. This, however, was not to be. Immediately after Brother Lee's passing in 1997, LSM's "blended brothers" published W. Lee's "Minister of the Age" messages in various forms, elaborating this theme into the centerpiece of their ministry. Presently these teachings loom large on the recovery's "radar screen."

Today LSM's "blended brothers" vehemently insist that in every age God has one unique mouthpiece for His up-to-date speaking—the "minister of the age." Only this unique minister has "the vision" and the "ministry of the age." He alone is qualified to speak and teach God's people. The implications are clear;<sup>7</sup> since God only gives His vision to one man, every other minister should teach only what the 'minister of the age' teaches. This implies uniformity of ministry; other ministers should serve merely as<sup>8</sup> "tape-recorders," duplicating the Minister of the Age. To teach anything else would be to "teach differently;" at best it is a distraction; at worst it is destructive and divisive.

Thirty years ago the "Co-workers in the Lord's Recovery" declared,<sup>9</sup> "All teachings...which claim the Holy Spirit as their source must be checked by God's revelation in His Word." If we are serious about taking the Bible as our unique standard, this teaching should be evaluated against Scripture. Here we examine whether this doctrine describes the early Church's situation in Acts. In particular we focus on the role of Stephen, the proto-martyr, whose message is recorded in Acts 7. We ask—Does the New Testament pattern of the early Church match the "blended brothers' Minister of the Age" doctrine? Does the Acts-record exhibit the uniformity of ministry implied by this dogma? Or, does it display diversity rather than uniformity, consistent with 1 Corinthians 12:5--a "variety of ministries but the same Lord"? We conclude that the 'one Minister of the Age' doctrine initially proposed by Bro. Witness Lee and repeated *ad nauseam* by LSM's "blended brothers," does not "fit the data" presented in Acts. The case of Stephen is an unambiguous counter-example.

### Peter, John & Stephen

The "blended brothers" apply their "one Minister of the Age" paradigm to Acts. They say,<sup>10</sup> "It is clear...in the New Testament...only one man was used by God to bring His vision to His people in a particular age....Peter was the one...he was the minister of that age." This assertion echoes Bro. Witness Lee's statement,<sup>11</sup> "In the first twelve chapters [of Acts] the Lord's move...was according to Peter's teaching. At that time, John was there also, but the teaching was not given through two persons. It was given through Peter. Even though John...was with Peter much of the time, the mouthpiece was only one—Peter. The "blended brothers" claim they are merely extrapolating from Brother Lee's teaching. However, the standard for evaluating the assertion Peter was God's unique mouthpiece (the 'minister of the age') is not Witness Lee's writings, but the Bible, the unique canon. It is true that no message by John is recorded in Acts; he is merely portrayed as Peter's companion. Nevertheless, strictly speaking, it is incorrect to assert that "the teaching [in Acts 1-12] was not given through two persons." What about Stephen? Elsewhere, Witness Lee himself describes Stephen as "a great teacher," adding,<sup>12</sup> "he was knowledgeable in God's Word. He surely was qualified to

teach the Scriptures.” Acts chapter 7 presents a detailed record of Stephen’s lengthy defence before the Jewish Sanhedrin. Its inclusion in the New Testament establishes beyond question its status as “God-breathed and profitable” (2 Tim. 3:16.) Luke’s record in Acts records three major messages by Peter (Acts 2, 3 & 10). By comparison Stephen’s message is significant both in length and content.

The “blended brothers” assert that “Peter...was the minister of that age.” Hence, based on their “Minister of the Age” dogma, one would expect Stephen to simply teach by expounding Peter’s previous messages, which constituted the apostles’ teaching up to that point in time (Acts 2:42). Perhaps the style could differ, but the basic content shouldn’t deviate from the confines of Peter’s ministry. However, significantly, **this is not what we find in Acts**. Stephen’s message not only differs from Peter’s in style, but also in substance. His speaking was not constrained by the apostles’ teaching<sup>13</sup> recorded in prior chapters. This contrast has not escaped the notice of New Testament scholars. F. F. Bruce writes,<sup>14</sup> “Stephen propounded an interpretation of the Way much more radical than that maintained and taught by the twelve [apostles].” In particular Stephen voiced disapproval of the status accorded to the Jerusalem temple both by the Jews and his Christian contemporaries.

### Stephen’s Denunciation vs. Peter’s Accommodation of the Jerusalem Temple

The temple was a forum for the apostles’ ministry (Acts 3:1). Gatherings of the church in Jerusalem were held daily in the temple (Acts 2:46; 5:42). Apparently the first New Testament Church had no qualms about operating within the sphere of Old Testament Judaism with its facilities and practices. This led Witness Lee to observe,<sup>15</sup> “The early believers were not clear concerning God’s New Testament economy with respect to the Judaic temple. **Not even the early apostles had a clear vision concerning God’s abandonment of the Judaic things**. Hence, even after God’s pouring out the Spirit upon them on the day of Pentecost to initiate a new dispensation, they still did not separate themselves from the Judaic temple...This led to a mixture of the Church with Judaism, a mixture that was not condemned by the early church in Jerusalem.” Evidently the apostles failed to grasp the implications of the change from the Old Testament dispensation of law to the New Testament dispensation of grace. “According to the record in Acts, the church in Jerusalem, including the twelve apostles, did not pass through the transitional period successfully. Rather, they had a failure,” Witness Lee asserts.<sup>16</sup> The twelve apostles, including Peter, the “Minister of the Age,” participated in (and bear responsibility for) this “failure.”

In this context, Stephen’s stand is striking. According to the “Minister of the Age” dogma<sup>7</sup>--only Peter had the vision; God did not give Stephen his own light and revelation. Hence Stephen should speak only the contents of Peter’s vision. Moreover, only Peter’s word counted; Stephen should speak according to that. However, the biblical record in Acts—specifically Stephen’s example—decisively refutes these claims. Clearly Stephen had his own vision, revelation, ministry and teaching. This is evident particularly in his attitude to the temple, expressed in his preaching, which aroused the ire of the religious authorities (Acts 6:13-14). F. F. Bruce, says,<sup>17</sup> “Stephen attracted attention by his critical attitude to the temple. At a time when the leaders of the church were attending its services daily, he took seriously Jesus’ prediction of its downfall, and maintained that such a permanent structure was not part of the divine plan for a pilgrim people.” This constitutes a major point in Stephen’s defence before the Sanhedrin. Another respected New Testament scholar, James Dunn, says,<sup>18</sup> “This is the most astonishing feature of [Stephen’s] speech—its outspoken attack on the temple...**he calls the temple an idol!**” In contrast to Stephen, the twelve apostles escaped the Sanhedrin’s censure on this issue due to their accommodation with Judaic temple worship.

Stephen’s attack on the temple implied a critique of the twelve apostles’ position. James Dunn draws attention to this,<sup>19</sup> “We should not ignore the fact that Stephen’s attitude was a **rejection** not only of the Jewish attitude to the temple but also **of the worship of the Aramaic/Hebrew speaking Christians so far as it continued to centre on the temple.**” He emphasizes that<sup>20</sup> “Stephen’s rejection of the temple meant in effect also **a rejection of the local Christians’ attitude to the temple...**the bulk of the new [Christian] community apparently continued to worship at the temple...Stephen’s speech was in fact a sharp-edged criticism of...his fellow believers...” led by Peter and the rest of the apostles. This suggests that Stephen’s vision concerning the change in dispensations was clearer than Peter’s; his speaking was more consistent with God’s New Testament economy. There is no

indication that Stephen confronted the twelve apostles on this issue. Nevertheless, he was not silenced by them either. Stephen's speaking was not constrained to conform to the apostles' teaching<sup>21</sup> as it had been unfolded up to that point. Evidently Stephen's ministry was allowed to co-exist together with the twelve apostles' ministry within the first Christian community, the church in Jerusalem. Stephen did not minister merely according to Peter's vision, repeating his teaching. He was not limited to speaking only what Peter (the "Minister of the Age") had spoken. Stephen was not an apostle, but merely one of the seven deacons appointed to "serve tables" (Acts 6:2-6.) Yet he had his own vision and ministry; he ministered accordingly. Furthermore, Stephen was not condemned by the apostles or the church for "teaching differently" from the (so-called) 'Minister of the Age.' In fact, the Holy Spirit vindicated Stephen's speaking by recording it in detail in the New Testament! **Clearly God had more than one mouthpiece.** Stephen's case represents a decisive counter-example to the "blended brothers'" exclusive teaching concerning one unique "minister of the age."

### A New Testament Precedent for Diversity, not Uniformity

Watchman Nee, along with others, regarded Acts as the "blueprint" for the entire Church age. In his view,<sup>22</sup> "what God has set forth as our example in the beginning is the eternal will of God. It is the divine standard for all time." Brother Nee regarded Acts as the normative standard. It was not merely the earliest phase of Church history; it provides the divine design for today. He wrote,<sup>23</sup> "God cannot lead a man one way in Acts and another today...[I]n principle the will and ways of God are just the same today as they were in the days of Acts." Based on this, Brother Nee issued the challenge of recovery<sup>24</sup> "we must return to the beginning, to the 'genesis' of the Church...[I]t is there we find the highest expression of His will. Acts is the 'genesis' of the Church's history."

This principle ought to be applied to the case of Stephen. As Dunn points out,<sup>25</sup> "It is clear that from an early date there was a *diversity of attitude to and practice of worship* and a *fairly sharp divergence of opinion*..." Along the same lines Dunn says,<sup>26</sup> "We see here *the first instance of Christians differing (and differing sharply) in their interpretation of Jesus' teaching*" about the role of the Jerusalem temple. During His earthly ministry, Jesus had predicted the destruction of the temple and personally abandoned it. Shortly after Pentecost, "Stephen...did not hesitate to emphasize this side of Jesus' teaching and to elaborate it even though it meant being (sharply) critical of his fellow (Hebrew) Christians and provoking the hostility of the more orthodox Jews," Dunn explains.<sup>27</sup> This observation of diverse attitudes and interpretations existing in the first local church cannot be dismissed by asserting—"That was a time of transition; it doesn't apply today!" If Acts is (in W. Nee's words) "the highest expression of God's will," that expression includes diversity and not uniformity; the Church's "blueprint" includes toleration, not excommunication. The "blueprint" applies today.

### Variety in Vision, Diversity in Ministry & Teaching, yet "One Accord"

The case of Stephen offers a striking counter-example to the "blended brothers' Minister of the Age" dogma. Although Stephen was a contemporary of the Apostle Peter, he clearly had his own vision, revelation, ministry and teaching (Acts 7:56). Stephen's vision, ministry and teaching were significantly different from Peter's, yet he had the liberty to exercise it. Moreover, the New Testament records a significant divergence in views and teaching within the early Church concerning temple worship. The environment of the early Church permitted the co-existence and expression of diverse views. Apparently the twelve apostles tolerated the expression of these divergent views. Stephen preached in the synagogues. The viewpoint represented by Stephen was not suppressed; nor was it condemned as a "different teaching." Stephen was not quarantined by the apostles for "teaching differently." Yet, in the presence of this obvious diversity, Luke still records that the believers were in 'one accord' (Acts 2:46; 4:24; 5:12). Witness Lee maintains that "one accord" characterized the Church prior to Acts 15;<sup>28</sup> this includes the period under discussion here. Apparently the differing visions of Peter and Stephen did not prohibit 'one accord' among the Jerusalem believers.

These observations contradict the claims of LSM's "blended brothers." They are on record asserting<sup>29</sup> "We cannot have one accord if we have a different vision. Otherwise we have di-vision. Division means 'two visions.' If I have one vision and you have another, we have division." Yet the Acts-record suggests that Stephen's vision differed significantly from Peter's; however that divergence did not cause division! From another perspective Stephen's interpretation of the Old

Testament Scriptures and Jesus' teaching regarding the temple also differed from the apostles'. According to the "blended brothers" such "interpretational differences" reflect serious underlying problems. They claim,<sup>30</sup> "When Christ is the Head practically in our experience, **it is impossible for there to be different interpretations** of the Scriptures. The Head is very clear. Interpretational differences prove that some members have problems with the Head and are not under the Head." In the present case, this dogmatic assertion implies that either Stephen or the twelve apostles had "problems with the Head and [were] not under the Head." One or the other stands condemned by the "blended brothers"! We leave them to answer the obvious question—"Which one?"

Moreover the "blended brothers" allege that diverse viewpoints among workers are another serious problem. "If there are two co-workers with two views, at least one of them does not have the vision," Bro. Ron Kangas asserts.<sup>31</sup> He also alleges<sup>32</sup> "As long as we have **different views on a minor point, we cannot have one accord** (Phil. 3: 15)." These claims appear inconsistent with the different viewpoint regarding the temple expressed by Stephen in Acts 7. Stephen's attitude contrasted sharply with that underlying the apostles' practice regarding the temple. This difference was not merely "on a minor point." It was not a superficial or irrelevant divergence in view. It was not concerning different personal practices like baptism by immersion vs. sprinkling. Nevertheless Luke does not record that the 'one accord' was lost, nor that disaccord was produced! Evidently the early believers' unity withstood the test of a much greater degree of diversity than many suppose.<sup>33</sup> Acts records 'one accord' even in the presence of differing views on important points of substance.

### **Biblical 'One Accord' Vs the Blended Brothers' Uniformity**

The Acts-record does not match the "blended brothers'" doctrine of a unique 'Minister of the Age,' with no diversity in vision, viewpoint and interpretation. Their theory fails to "fit to data" contained in Acts for at least two reasons. First a careful analysis of Acts implies we should reject the notion of a unique 'Minister of the Age.' Certainly Peter was God's mouthpiece and an important one. However, **God also used other believers as His mouthpiece**—Stephen being a prime example. This view matches Witness Lee's statement<sup>34</sup>—"In the New Testament age God would not allow His people to have a single, unique leader among men." The Apostle Peter was not the first "Pope," as Roman Catholics claim; neither was he the first in a line of unique "Ministers of the Age," as LSM's "blended brothers" allege! Moreover, we reject claims of "ministerial continuation" by successive "Ministers of the Age," just as we deny Catholic claims of apostolic succession among the Popes

Another underlying reason Acts fails to fit the "blended brothers' mold" is that what they term 'one accord' actually corresponds to uniformity. By definition even minor differences in viewpoint or interpretation violate uniformity. Evidently the "blended brothers'" concept of "one accord" is indistinguishable from uniformity. Hence, LSM-President, Benson Phillips says,<sup>35</sup> **Forget about uniformity; we do not have uniformity....**Be assured that what will come out of our living in one accord will not be uniformity...**It may look the same...**To those who do not have a proper vision, they only see uniformity. **We do not see uniformity.**" Apparently Bro. Benson wishes to place this question beyond dispute, outside the realm of objective verification. According to him, uniformity and 'one accord' may look the same, yet, if anyone identifies it as uniformity, it simply proves he doesn't have "the proper vision"! In contrast, those possessing "the proper vision, do not see uniformity," says Bro. Benson. This relegates this question to the subjective realm. Sceptics might respond with the folk-wisdom—"if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck—then it's a duck." Along these lines, LSM's version 'one accord' surely looks and sounds like uniformity! In contrast, the Acts-record indicates that 'one accord' can exist, even in the presence of marked differences in vision, views and interpretation. This biblical description doesn't match the "blended brothers'" version of 'one accord,' because their definition amounts to uniformity.

The "blended brothers'" version of 'one accord' contrasts with Witness Lee's words,<sup>36</sup> "To be in **one accord does not mean to get rid of all the differences.** If this were the case, we would never have the one accord in this age. We must...keep the unity without caring to have uniformity." Early in his ministry Witness Lee testified that the co-workers were able to work together despite pronounced doctrinal differences. He said,<sup>37</sup> "we fellow workers...have been able to keep together... though we have not always seen eye to eye on points of doctrine...We dare not say that we have had no differences of opinion (sometimes they have been quite pronounced); but....**we have not gotten**

into difficulty even when we have differed in our doctrinal viewpoint." This raises the obvious question—If co-workers could be in 'one accord' despite pronounced differences then, why not now?

In scientific analysis one well-documented counter-example which violates an established scientific law calls the whole hypothesis into question. We offer the New Testament case of Stephen, the proto-martyr, as a decisive counter-example to LSM's paradigm of the unique "Minister of the Age" and 'one accord.' We believe unbiased evaluators of Luke's portrait of the early Church would conclude it is characterized by unity with marked diversity. It does not depict the kind of rigid uniformity accompanied by a mere token variety implied by the "blended brothers' Minister of the Age" doctrine or their definition of 'one accord.' These teachings are not the issue of "cutting straight the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15) Shouldn't these New Testament examples, expounded without distortion, inform our practice today?

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#### NOTES:

1. W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, p. 127. Messages in this volume were given to approx. 425 leading brothers at the elders' training in Anaheim, CA, February, 1986. It is important to note that these messages were not given in a vacuum; they were addressing certain situations and specific brothers. W. Lee said, "I called these gatherings, truthfully speaking, not for all of you but for some of you." (p. 53) In suggesting that in 1986 Bro. Witness Lee "felt his leadership was being challenged," we are not evaluating whether that subjective feeling was justified (or unjustified,) based on the actual situation. [We leave that question to others more knowledgeable than ourselves.] We are simply suggesting a plausible explanation for why the "Minister of the Age," "wise master builder" (and related concepts) were devised at that time.
2. W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, p. 58
3. W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, p. 64 (emphasis added)
4. For example, W. Lee said, "In the army the impact is the morale. What is the morale in the army? It is the one accord. That is why no commander of any army would allow any soldier to bring in any different thought...If anyone expresses anything different or is dissenting, he will be cut off in order to keep the morale." W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, p. 12] W. Lee also said, "For the Lord's recovery to have an impact, we need the recovery to have one accord. To be citizens of the U.S. is one thing, but for these citizens to be formed into an army to fight the battle for the U.S. is another thing." [W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, p. 125] Moreover, he also said, "**All of you are the elders**, the co-workers, and the apprentice elders, the leading ones in the recovery. **I am speaking to you all as the soldiers in the Lord's recovery, not to citizens. I am speaking to the soldiers of the army.**" W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, p. 87]
5. W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, pp. 95-96 Witness Lee equated the "one wise master builder" with the "commander-in-chief" of the army, saying: "In the New Testament you cannot find the term, 'commander-in-chief' (p. 65) However, he appealed to "the uncertain sounding of the trumpet" (1 Cor. 14:8) to infer an army and "in an army there is a need of a general to command the army, to direct the army to fight." (p. 96) He then proceeded to elaborate concerning the master builder (1 Cor. 3:10) saying "Not all the apostles are master builders. With a building, there cannot be two master builders. That would bring in confusion." (p. 96) Hence, notwithstanding Romans 15:20 and Watchman Nee's exposition on this topic in Church Affairs about "other builders who lay a foundation," the "one wise master builder" teaching was devised.
6. As far as I am aware, the concept of "the Minister of the Age" was introduced by Witness Lee in messages given to the elders and co-workers in Taiwan in March 1986. That is one month subsequent to the messages in One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7. Significantly, these messages were first published in English in the first issues of The Ministry magazine, commenced after W. Lee's passing (1997.) Subsequently they were reissued as The Vision of the Age in April 2003. That became the main topic in several LSM conferences & trainings conducted by the "blended brothers."
7. Take for example the writing of Bob Danker "On the Minister of the Age and the Wise Master Builder." Bob Danker asserts that "in every age **God does not give His vision...to two men; He gives it to only one man...he is the minister of the age.** In God's unique work...**only [his] word counts.** Anyone who speaks for God...must speak according to [that]...**God does not give other ministers their own light**

and revelation. All the ministers...must...speak only the contents of the unique vision. This is a strong principle that holds in every age, including today." This article first appeared in "Contributions" on the web-site: AFaithfulWord.org (Dated 31 March 2006.) It has since been published by DCP as part of their 28-book "Attack Pack." It appears under the title, "The Minister of the Age and the Wise Master Builder" as "Book 2" in "Series Three" in this "LSM-endorsed" publication series. The practical implications of this view are spelled out in his conclusion, where Bob Danker states, "All the co-workers with the leading ones and the saints in all the churches should be wise to **acknowledge the minister of this age and the master builder in this age** and should serve together in one accord in the Lord's unique recovery without dissenting or expressing any opinion... **under the leadership in the Lord's ministry today.**" The phrase, "under the leadership in the Lord's ministry today" means under the leadership of LSM's "blended co-workers." (Emphasis added)

8. At one point in his later ministry, Witness Lee exhorted the believers in the Lord's recovery to be his "tape recorders." This appears to contradict Watchman Nee's word that, in the New Testament age, God does not want "tape recorders." W. Nee, writes: "In the New testament ministry God entrusts His word to man, and He uses man's own elements to express His word. **He does not make man a tape recorder....God does not want to do this.**" [W. Nee, The Ministry of God's Word p. 12]
9. Quote from pp. 8-9 of "The Beliefs and Practices of the Local Churches" by "The Co-workers in the Lord's Recovery," published by LSM, 1978.
10. Bob Danker "On the Minister of the Age and the Wise Master Builder" AFW.org
11. W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training, Book 7, p. 111.
12. W. Lee, Life-study of Acts, pp. 157-8
13. see note 21 below.
14. F. F. Bruce, Peter, Stephen, James & John, p. 52. F. F. Bruce (1910-1990) was a leading evangelical scholar & Professor of Biblical Criticism & Exegesis at the University of Manchester, England.
15. W. Lee, Life-study of Acts p. 101. Elsewhere, Witness Lee concedes "even the...apostles were not clear that God had forsaken Judaism...including its temple. Hence, according to their tradition and habit, they still went to the temple for their New Testament meeting." footnote 1 on Acts 2:46 (RcV.) & W. Lee, Life-study of Acts p. 97, p. 99
16. W. Lee, Life-study of Acts p. 166
17. F. F. Bruce, Paul: Apostle of the Heart set Free, p. 67 "Stephen attracted attention by his critical attitude to the temple. At a time when the leaders of the church were attending its services daily, he took seriously Jesus' prediction of its downfall, and maintained that such a permanent structure was not part of the divine plan for a pilgrim people....He further maintained that the coming of Jesus had profoundly changed the status of the Mosaic law." Elsewhere he writes, "The coming of Jesus, Stephen maintained, involved the abrogation of the Mosaic customs and the cessation of sacrificial worship" in the Jerusalem temple." F. F. Bruce, Peter, Stephen, James & John, p. 52
18. James D. G. Dunn, Unity & Diversity in the New Testament p. 271. James D. G. Dunn is a Professor of Divinity at the University of Durham, England. Dunn elaborates saying, "This is the most astonishing feature of [Stephen's] speech—its outspoken attack on the temple. The key word here is Stephen's description of the temple as 'made with hands' (*cheirpoietos*). It was a word used by more sophisticated Greek thinkers in criticism of idolatry. But, more important, it was regularly used by Hellenistic Jews in their condemnation of paganism....But Stephen uses this adjective of the temple in Jerusalem---**he calls the temple an idol!**—and compounds his blasphemy by quoting Isa. 66: 1-2, one of the few OT passages which seem to denounce the temple root and branch." [James D. G. Dunn, Unity & Diversity in the New Testament p. 271. Emphasis original.]
19. James D. G. Dunn, Unity & Diversity in the New Testament (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) p. 128 (emphasis original)
20. James D. G. Dunn, Unity & Diversity in the New Testament p. 272
21. We use the phrase "the apostles' teaching as it had been unfolded up to that point" to indicate the cumulative teaching to date of the twelve apostles, led by Peter (Acts 2:42). Since many of the apostles' writings (including Paul's epistles) were not yet written, at that point in time the New Testament was not yet completed. Hence the "apostles' teaching," in the sense of including all 27 New Testament books, was not unfolded in full at that time. Stephen's message probably went beyond the apostles' teaching as it had been unfolded up to that point in time. Eventually however, Stephen's message before the Sanhedrin was recorded by Luke (Acts 7) and became part of the "apostles' teaching," the entire New Testament. Witness Lee defines "the apostles' teaching" as the entire New Testament. Take for e.g. the following statement: "The only proper teaching in the New Testament is the apostles' teaching...The orthodox teaching is that of the apostles recorded in the 27 books of the New Testament from Matthew through Revelation." (W. Lee Life-study of Acts, p. 92)
22. Watchman Nee, The Normal Christian Church Life, in Collected Works, vol. 30, p. xvi
23. W. Nee, The Normal Christian Church Life, p. xv
24. W. Nee, The Normal Christian Church Life, p. xvi
25. James D. G. Dunn, Unity & Diversity in the NT p. 129 (emphasis original)
26. James D. G. Dunn, Unity & Diversity in the NT p. 272 (emphasis original)
27. James D. G. Dunn, Unity & Diversity in the NT p. 272

28. Witness Lee says, "After Acts 15 however, this word for one accord is not used again in the book of Acts. This somewhat implies that even during this period of time described in Acts, the one accord was lost...At the end of Acts 15 there was a dissenting between Barnabas and Paul. After this incident, I believe that the one accord to some extent was lost." [W Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, pp. 12-13] The point is that Witness Lee ascribes 'one accord' to the whole section Acts 1 to 12.
29. EM, The Ministry, vol. 9, No. 8, Sept. 2005, p. 137 Bro. Ed Marks says, "di-vision. Division means 'two visions.' If I have one vision and you have another, we have division." This exposition uses the pun, playing on the English word, "division". Ed Marks parses the word as: *di-vision*. Saying, "**Division means two visions.**" **However, there is no basis for this. It is simply a pun! The English word "division" does not mean "two visions."** According to *Webster "Division"*: Etymology: Middle English, from Anglo-French *devisioun*, from Latin *division-*, *divisio*, **from *dividere* to *dividere***. **NOTE:** as a prefix "Di" means two in some instances e.g. dichromatic etc. But with the word "division," there's no indication that "di" is a prefix. **This exposition is bogus!!**
30. RK, The Ministry, vol. 8, no. 7 p. 183
31. RK, The Ministry, vol. 9, No. 8, Sept. 2005, p. 21
32. The Ministry, vol. 9, No. 2, Feb. 2005 p. 64
33. W. Lee's examples of "unity with variety and variety versus uniformity" include tolerating "certain differences, such as differences in the way of baptism and in the observing of days." "This," says W. Lee, "we consider as unity with variety. By tolerating this kind of variety, we annul uniformity. This is variety versus uniformity." [W. Lee, The Eldership & the God-Ordained Way (2), Elders' Training Book 10, p. 64.] However, skeptics would regard this as merely "token diversity" and "symbolic variety." No doubt much greater variety & diversity were contemplated when these slogans—"unity with variety" and "variety versus uniformity" were introduced at the start of the church-life in Los Angeles in 1963. When the church-life began in Los Angeles, its stated goal was to express the oneness of the Body of Christ, a unity with variety and without uniformity. In a public statement issued on May 19, 1963, the brothers declared, "[We] came to meet together on the church ground in Los Angeles in the beginning of March 1963. We do not intend to be any kind of new 'movement,' but to practice the unity of the Spirit, **a unity with variety, and the variety versus uniformity**, in the way of a local church" (James D. Reetzke Sr., Recollections with Thanksgiving. Chicago: Chicago Bibles and Books, 2001, p. 34).
34. W Lee, Crucial Principles for a Proper Church Life, 1978, chp. 3 The statement in context reads, "In Matthew 23:8 the Lord said, "Do not be called Rabbi, for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers." Acts 5:31 says, "This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior." Christ is our one Teacher and Leader. **In the New Testament age God would not allow His people to have a single, unique leader among men.** There was not one apostle but twelve apostles. Besides the twelve, there were other apostles, such as Paul, Barnabas, and Timothy."
35. BP, The Ministry, v. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, pp. 37-38. The context of this statement is "Every believer should be in one accord with one mind, one will, one intention. Do not say that you are standing against uniformity and that you cannot agree with such a thing. **Forget about uniformity; we do not have uniformity.** We are talking about something very organic...Be assured that what will come out of our living in one accord will not be uniformity...**It may look the same...**To those who do not have a proper vision, they only see uniformity. We do not see uniformity."
36. W. Lee, The Practice of the Church Life according to the God-ordained Way, p. 39. The quote in context reads, "The church life must be of unity with variety. To be in one accord does not mean to get rid of all the differences. If this were the case, we would never have the one accord in this age. We must be exercised to such an extent that we keep the unity without caring to have uniformity. We should be happy to see a meeting full of differences, yet without any discord".
37. W. Lee, Consecration (booklet) by Witness Lee, p. 12. The quote in context reads: "For almost 40 years of our history, **we fellow workers** who have borne the main burden of the work **have been able to keep together** because, **though we have not always seen eye to eye on points of doctrine**, we have all--to some extent at least--learned one lesson, i.e. to let God work. Before taking in hand any work for Him, we have first let Him take us in hand, and thereafter we have taken on the work. **We dare not say that we have had no differences of opinion (sometimes they have been quite pronounced);** but we can conscientiously say that everyone has learned something of what it means to be on the altar for God's satisfaction. For this reason **we have not gotten into difficulty even when we have differed in our doctrinal viewpoint.**"