

Witness Lee, the “Wise Master Builder,” & the “Acting God”

For many, the most memorable speaking in the LSM Training on “the Building of God” was “the wise master builder” and the “acting God.” One unforgettable statement was:¹ *“If we would do the work of the divine building, we must be **one with the wise master builder, who is the acting God.**”* According to the “blended co-workers,” the “wise master builder” is preeminent among God’s workmen. They said,² *“In the New Testament there were many apostles. ...but not all apostles were wise master builders. In any generation of God’s building, there is **one and only one master builder.** Paul was one....”* Moreover, the scope of his work is global, because,³ *“He has the capacity to **oversee the entire work on the earth** in relation to God’s economy for His building.”*

Some might ask: “Who is today’s master builder?” The “blended co-workers” provided a definite answer, at least for the recent past, the twentieth century. They proclaimed unambiguously that Brother Lee was the wise master builder. One declared,⁴ *“Brother Lee could not say it then, but we can say it today: He was the wise master builder; he was **the minister of the age.**...”* Hence, we have two striking declarations, by a prominent “blended co-worker”⁵--*“we must be **one with the wise master builder, who is the acting God**” and “**Brother Lee...was the wise master builder.**”* In the minds of some hearers (including myself), these two statements were combined—“Witness Lee was the acting God.” This saying was attributed to the speaker in several writings, including my own.

AFaithfulWord.org—the LSM-brothers Protest

A recent posting on an LSM-sponsored website roundly criticizes us for this, saying:⁶ *“The “Concerned Brothers” falsely claim that Ron Kangas declared that **“Witness Lee was the acting God.”** This purported quote for which the “Concerned Brothers” censure Brother Ron is a blatant fabrication.”* The LSM-brothers proceed to set the public record straight: *“**He did not say, as the dissenters claim, “Witness Lee is [or was] the acting God.” That statement is neither in the printed message, nor in the spoken message.**”* They also express shock and outrage at this *“public attempt to discredit one of the co-workers by fabricated quotes and false implications ...is shameful and should discredit them....”* The purpose of this piece is to briefly respond.

First, let me assure the brothers—their protests have not fallen on deaf ears. I have re-listened to the message. **I stand corrected.** Brother Ron Kangas did **not** say “Witness Lee was the acting God.” Please accept my sincere apologies for this erroneous attribution. Having said this, perhaps I could take a moment to re-examine what Brother Ron did say and consider the implications. This might help clarify why I (and others) arrived at the (erroneous) conclusion, identifying Witness Lee with the acting God.

“The Wise Master Builder, Who is the Acting God”

Brother Ron presented “10 Requirements for Doing the Work of the Divine Building.” The tenth item was,⁷ **“Needing to Be One with the Wise Master Builder, Who is the Acting God.”** In this context, the three items—Brother Lee, the wise master builder and the “acting God”—were juxtaposed. We were told Brother Lee had applied the phrase, “the acting God” to Samuel, the Old Testament prophet. Brother Ron proceeded to apply it to Paul, saying, *“**The apostle Paul, as seen in 2 Corinthians and elsewhere, surely was the acting God, representing Him.**”* He pointed out that the Greek word for “master builder” can be anglicized as architect. Moreover, *“Hebrews 11:10 also speaks of...the city...whose Architect and Builder is God. On one hand, the Architect is God, and on the other hand, the architect, **the wise master builder, was the apostle Paul.**”* In this way, brother Ron buttressed his case that *“**The apostle Paul...was the acting God.**”* He then transitioned to Brother Lee, saying,⁸ *“[We] must be one with the wise master builder. This oneness means that first [we] are one with Paul and with Paul’s revelation. However, we have needed help from the ministry of the age to understand and see what Paul saw, to receive the design he received. Thus, we believe that, **in principle,** in the Lord’s recovery **our brother Lee was the wise master builder.** If we want to do the work of*

building, **we need to also be one with him.**" Hence, the current application of "being one with the wise master builder" was to be "one with" Brother Lee.

What Did Ron Kangas Really Say?

Brother Ron Kangas did not say, "Witness Lee was the acting God." However, he did make a number of related statements. His main point was: "If we would do the work of the divine building, **we must be one with the wise master builder, who is the acting God.**" In expounding this point, brother Ron said:

(1) **"the wise master builder, was the apostle Paul"**

(2) **"The apostle Paul...was the acting God."**

(3) **"in principle...our brother Lee was the wise master builder...we need to also be one with him."**

What Did Ron Kangas Imply?

What does all this mean? Certainly, brother Ron applied the statement—"we must be one with the wise master builder, who is the acting God"—to the apostle Paul. Paul is explicitly designated as both "the wise master builder" and "the acting God." What about Brother Lee? Brother Ron did not explicitly say Witness Lee was the acting God. However, he did say that "our brother Lee was the wise master builder" with whom "we need to...be one." Moreover, this statement about Brother Lee appears under the heading: "Needing to Be One with the Wise Master Builder, Who is the Acting God." The principle being expounded here was "If we would do the work of the divine building, we must be **one with the wise master builder who is the acting God.**" It was in this context Witness Lee was identified as the wise master builder.

I contend the obvious deduction is that Witness Lee is, in fact, the acting God. Yes, brother Ron did not make this explicit statement. However, it is surely a logical implication of his statements taken in context. Logically, the statements A=B and B=C, when taken together, imply that A=C. Applying this logical sequence, Brother Lee=the wise master builder (A=B) and the wise master builder=the acting God (B=C) **imply that Brother Lee is the acting God.** Hence, I conclude that **Brother Ron's sharing implied that Brother Lee was the acting God.** Yet, the LSM-brothers charge that we have drawn "**false implications**!"

Perhaps some will seek refuge in the words, "in principle." I suppose, someone could claim that the qualifier, "**in principle**," provides an "escape clause." They might argue the sentence, "**in principle...our brother Lee was the wise master builder**," means that "in practice" (as opposed to "in principle",) Witness Lee was **NOT** the wise master builder! However, in an earlier message, the same brother boldly declared:⁹ "**Brother Lee could not say it then, but we can say it today: He was the wise master builder; he was the minister of the age.**" Hence, we have a clear, unambiguous declaration (without any qualifying phrase) that, "**Brother Lee...was the wise master builder.**" No doubt this understanding was carried over by most listeners into the later message about the acting God.

What Did Ron Kangas Communicate?

Shortly after the LSM Winter Training, reports circulated, attributing the statement "Witness Lee was the acting God" to brother Ron. One example, in the form of an E-mail, may suffice as an illustration. One saint reported:

"I have just finished the winter training. My spirit was stirred up (in a negative) sense to the amount of speaking that would lead us to follow the ministry, and doctrines of man, rather than Christ. When brother Ron [Kangas] said, **"to be builders of the house of God, we must be one with the wise master builder who is the acting God."** My spirit immediately was shaken, but was grieved when he said that **the "acting God" was Brother Lee.** Even today, I question myself, "did I really hear this?" and in talking to some of the saints yesterday....sadly I did."

Here is an unsolicited report, suggesting the writer believed Witness Lee was designated as the acting God. Moreover, evidently, his understanding was confirmed by other saints! Was this report (and others like it) also "*a blatant fabrication...of the dissenters*"? In my view, the hearers simply drew the obvious implication from brother Ron's speaking. They "connected the

dots;" they added "two plus two" and got "four." We should not only ask: "What did Ron Kangas **really** say"? Shouldn't we also ask: "What did the saints understand from Ron Kangas' speaking"? More generally, "what was communicated to the saints"? What would a survey of the testimonies and "testing" of that Training message reveal? How many times, in their review, testing or prophesying, did the saints declare: "Witness Lee was the acting God"? At least I can confirm that in this locality that statement was made. I don't believe this is an isolated case. Then (in that case) wasn't **the concept communicated** to the saints that "Witness Lee was the acting God"?

Conclusion

The LSM-brothers have established that brother Ron Kangas did **not** say explicitly that "Witness Lee was (or is) the acting God." On this point I was in error and I apologize for that. However, (in my view) **brother Ron's statements, taken in context, imply that Brother Lee, as the wise master builder, was the acting God.** The concept—Witness Lee was the acting God —**is a logical deduction and a direct implication of brother Ron's messages.** Moreover, reports indicate that a significant number of saints understood Ron's speaking that way. Wasn't that **the concept communicated** to the saints? For some, this was a "crystal" from the LSM Training. Were they (and I) totally wrong? Did the saints err by stating explicitly what brother Ron left implicit? If this is a "*false inference*," not only should I be corrected, but also, many other saints! **Are the LSM-brothers and brother Ron willing to go on record, declaring that "Witness Lee as the wise master builder was NOT the acting God"?** If not, isn't this merely a debate over semantics? Are the LSM-brothers simply seeking to score debating points on AFaithfulWord.org? In fact, don't the LSM-brothers **endorse** the understanding that "Witness Lee was the acting God"? If not, please say so, unambiguously. Perhaps they should say—"Brother Ron didn't say, 'Witness Lee was the acting God'—but, we agree with it"! If that is indeed the case, why do the LSM-brothers react in such a hostile, "take-no-prisoners" manner? Could it be that they've forgotten we are not plaintiffs in the law courts? Aren't we your brothers in the same recovery?

Nigel Tomes
June 2006

Addendum

Virtually simultaneous with the posting of this item, brother Ron Kangas again addressed the topic of the 'acting God.' The LSM outline states:¹⁰ "Samuel was the representative of God...as such, **Samuel was the acting God...**" In expounding this point, brother Ron asked rhetorically,¹⁰ "[Today] are there or are there not such persons (at least as works in progress)? **Was Watchman Nee or was he not such a person?...Was Brother Lee or was he not such a person to a very high degree? This is to testify real God-men walked on this earth and they ministered...**" I understand, "such a person" to mean "the acting God." Doesn't this further confirm that the inference attributed to Brother Ron—that "Witness Lee was the acting God"—was justified? Why then do the LSM-brothers lambaste us for "*attempt[ing] to discredit one of the co-workers by fabricated quotes and false implications*" and accuse us of "*a blatant fabrication*"? Who is attempting to discredit whom? We leave the reader to decide whether we drew "*false implications*" or the correct inference from Ron's message.

Nigel Tomes
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NOTES:

1. **The Ministry**, vol. 10, No. 1, (Jan./Feb. 2006) p. 212
2. **The Ministry**, vol. 10, No. 1, (Jan./Feb. 2006) p. 149
3. **The Ministry**, vol. 10, No. 1, (Jan./Feb. 2006) p. 150
4. **The Ministry**, vol. 10, No. 1, (Jan./Feb. 2006) p. 150 (emphasis original)
5. The quotations above are from messages given by brother Ron Kangas. Unless otherwise indicated, quotes by "blended co-workers" in this piece are from Ron Kangas' speaking
6. From the LSM-sponsored website: AFaithfulWord.org. Article entitled: "**Witness Lee was the Acting**

God"—What Did Ron Kangas Really Say?" The authors of this piece are members of the LSM-sponsored "Defense & Confirmation project,"—Brothers Dan Towle, Bill Buntain & Dan Sady. Brother Dan Towle is one of the "blended co-workers." We assume that all postings on this site have passed through LSM's "discerning check" and are part of LSM's 'one publication' in its internet form. For simplicity we refer to the authors as the "LSM-brothers."

7. **The Ministry**, vol. 10, No. 1, (Jan./Feb. 2006) p. 212

8. **The Ministry**, vol. 10, No. 1, (Jan./Feb. 2006) p. 213

9. **The Ministry**, vol. 10, No. 1, (Jan./Feb. 2006) p. 150

10. Wednesday Night Ministry Message to FTTA, June 28, 2006 (06/28/06 Code: S06FTT18)