

◆ AN OPEN LETTER ◆

To the Leadership of Living Stream Ministry and the “Local Churches”

Living Stream Ministry and the “local churches” (also known as The Lord’s Recovery), both founded by the late Witness Lee, have been involved for decades in legal and theological controversies with noted Christian institutions and leaders. In light of this history of litigation and conflict, we the undersigned make this public appeal.

Because the following statements by Witness Lee appear to contradict or compromise essential doctrines of the Christian faith, we respectfully call on the leadership of Living Stream Ministry and the “local churches” to disavow and cease to publish these and similar declarations:

On the Nature of God

“The Son is called the Father; so the Son must be the Father. We must realize this fact. There are some who say that He is called the Father, but He is not really the Father. But how could He be *called* the Father and yet not *be* the Father?... In the place where no man can approach Him (I Tim. 6:16), God is the Father. When He comes forth to manifest Himself, He is the Son. So, a Son is given, yet His name is called ‘The everlasting Father.’ This very Son who has been given to us is the very Father.”

Witness Lee, *The All-Inclusive Spirit of Christ* (Los Angeles: The Stream Publishers, 1969), pp. 4–5

“...the entire Godhead, the Triune God, became flesh.”

Witness Lee, *God’s New Testament Economy* (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1986), p. 230

“The traditional explanation of the Trinity is grossly inadequate and borders on tritheism. When the Spirit of God is joined with us, God is not left behind, nor does Christ remain on the throne. This is the impression Christianity gives. They think of the Father as one Person, sending the Son, another Person, to accomplish redemption, after which the Son sends the Spirit, yet another Person. The Spirit, in traditional thinking, comes into the believers, while the Father and Son are left on the throne. When believers pray, they are taught to bow before the Father and pray in the name of the Son. To split the Godhead into these separate Persons is not the revelation of the Bible....”

Witness Lee, *Life Messages* (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1979), p. 164

“THE SON IS THE FATHER, AND THE SON IS ALSO THE SPIRIT.... and the Lord Jesus who is the Son is also the Eternal Father. Our Lord is the Son, and He is also the Father. Hallelujah!”

Witness Lee, *Concerning the Triune God* (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1973), pp. 18–19

“Therefore, it is clear: The Lord Jesus is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and He is the very God. He is also

the Lord. He is the Father, the Son, the Spirit, the Mighty God, and the Lord.”

Witness Lee, *The Clear Scriptural Revelation Concerning the Triune God*
www.contendingforthefaith.org/responses/booklets/triune.html

“The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are not three separate persons or three Gods; they are one God, one reality, one person.”

Witness Lee, *The Triune God to Be Life to the Tripartite Man* (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1970), p. 48

On the Nature of Humanity

“Christ is of two natures, the human and the divine, and we are the same: we are of the human nature, but covered with the divine. He is the God-man, and we are the God-men. He is the ark made of wood covered with gold, and we are the boards made of wood covered with gold. In number we are different, but in nature we are exactly the same.”

Witness Lee, *The All-Inclusive Christ* (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 5th ed. 1989), p. 103

“God can say to His believers, ‘I am divine and human,’ and His believers can reply, ‘Praise You, Lord. You are divine and human, and we are human and divine.’”

Witness Lee, *The Triune God to Be Life to the Tripartite Man* (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1990), pp. 51–52

“My burden is to show you clearly that God’s economy and plan is to make Himself man and to make us, His created beings, ‘God,’ so that He is ‘man-ized’ and we are ‘God-ized.’ In the end, He and we, we and He, all become God-men.”

Witness Lee, *A Deeper Study of the Divine Dispensing* (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1990), p. 54

“We the believers are begotten of God. What is begotten of man is man, and what is begotten of God must be God. We are born of God; hence, in this sense, we are God.”

Ibid., p. 53

“Because the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all one with the Body of Christ, we may say that the Triune God is now the ‘four-in-one God.’ These four are the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Body. The Three of the Divine Trinity cannot be confused or separated, and the four-in-one also cannot be separated or confused.”

Ibid., pp. 203–204

On the Legitimacy of Evangelical Churches and Denominations

We decry as inconsistent and unjustifiable the attempts by Living Stream and the “local churches” to gain membership in associations of evangelical churches and ministries

while continuing to promote Witness Lee's denigrating characterizations of such churches and ministries as follows:

"The Lord is not building His church in Christendom, which is composed of the apostate Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant denominations. This prophecy is being fulfilled through the Lord's recovery, in which the building of the genuine church is being accomplished."

Witness Lee in *The New Testament Recovery Version*, note 18⁴ (Matthew 16:18)
(Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1991), p. 99
<http://online.recoveryversion.org/FootNotes.asp?FNtsID=639>

"The apostate church has deviated from the Lord's word and become heretical. The reformed church, though recovered to the Lord's word to some extent, has denied the Lord's name by denominating herself, taking many other names, such as Lutherans, Wesleyan, Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist, etc. ... To deviate from the Lord's word is apostasy, and to denominate the church by taking any name other than the Lord's is spiritual fornication."

Witness Lee in *The New Testament Recovery Version*, note 8³ (Revelation 3:8)
(Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1991), p. 1256
<http://online.recoveryversion.org/FootNotes.asp?FNtsID=8759>

"I am afraid that a number of us are still under the negative influence of Christendom. We all have to realize that today the Lord is going on and on to fully recover us and bring us fully out of Christendom."

Witness Lee, *The History of the Church and the Local Churches* (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1991), p. 132

"In every denomination, including the Roman Catholic Church, there are real, saved Christians. They are God's people belonging to the Lord. But the organization of the denominations in which they are is not of God. The denominational organizations have been utilized by Satan to set up his satanic system to destroy God's economy of the proper church life."

Witness Lee, "Message Thirty-Four" in *The Life-Study of Genesis* (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1987), Vol. 1, p. 464

"We do not care for Christianity, we do not care for Christendom, we do not care for the Roman Catholic church, and we do not care for all the denominations, because in the Bible it says that the great Babylon is fallen. This is a declaration. Christianity is fallen, Christendom is fallen, Catholicism is fallen, and all the denominations are fallen. Hallelujah!"

Witness Lee, *The Seven Spirits for the Local Churches* (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1989), p. 97

"To know God is not adequate. To know Christ is also not adequate. Even to know the church is not adequate. We must go on to know the churches which are local. If we are up-to-date in following the Lord, we will realize that today is the day of the local churches."

Ibid., p. 23

We respectfully call on the leadership of Living Stream Ministry and the "local churches" to disavow and cease to publish these and similar declarations.

On Lawsuits with Evangelical Christians

If the leadership of Living Stream Ministry and the "local churches" regard evangelical Christians as fellow believers, we request that they publicly renounce the use of lawsuits and the threat of lawsuits against evangelical Christians to answer criticisms or resolve conflicts. The New Testament strongly discourages the use of lawsuits to settle disputes among Christians (see 1 Corinthians 6:1-8).

If the leadership of Living Stream Ministry and the "local churches" do not regard evangelical Christian churches, organizations, and ministries as legitimate Christian entities, we ask that they publicly resign their membership in all associations of evangelical churches and ministries.

In either case, we respectfully request that the leadership of Living Stream Ministry and the "local churches" discontinue their practice of using litigation and threatened litigation to answer criticisms or settle disputes with Christian organizations and individuals.

Sincerely,

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For the complete list of signers consisting of more than fifty evangelical scholars and ministry leaders from six countries visit www.open-letter.org.

Note: The signers of this document are representing their own personal position. The views expressed are not necessarily those of their institutions, organizations, or employers.