

Who are God's Delegated Authorities in the Body?

Recently, a dissenting sister published an article in the internet entitled "*Authority in the Body*", citing chapters 7 and 8 of Brother Watchman Nee's book *Authority and Submission* as sources for her teaching, thereafter followed by another article entitled "*The Deputy Authority*" reiterating her claims.

In the writing, the sister purported to present Brother Nee's view of who the authorities in the Body are. It is noteworthy that she gave much emphasis to "other members" and "the members' function" being a delegated authority from God to us in the Body which Brother Nee brought up in chapter 8, while totally omitting the elders, elderly saints, men and husbands as God's delegated authority in the church which Brother Nee taught in chapter 7. This negligence appears to be more of a misdeed, as any reader could not have missed such an important point, being that Brother Nee presented this item under its own sub-heading and as the very first point on delegated authorities in the church.

THE GOD-ESTABLISHED SYSTEMS OF AUTHORITY

In chapter 7, Brother Nee's message was on God's intention for man to submit to representative authority. There are God-established systems of authority, first in the world, second in the family, and third and most importantly, in the church. In the world, God has appointed governments and officials over us for us to submit to. In the family, children need to submit to parents.

THE GOD-ESTABLISHED AUTHORITIES IN THE CHURCH

In the church, God also wants us to submit to the authorities He has appointed over us, whom he identified in this chapter to be the elders, the elderly saints, men, and husbands.

Brother Nee said:

"God has His appointed authorities in the church. They are the elders who take the lead well and those who labor in word and teaching. God commands that all should submit to them. In addition, all the younger ones should submit to the older ones. First Peter 5:5 says, 'In like manner, younger men, be subject to elders.' Chapter five speaks of those who are elderly in age, while 1 Corinthians 16:15 speaks of the household of Stephanas as 'the firstfruits of Achaia (indicating seniority in the order of salvation), and they have set themselves to minister to the saints.' Stephanas was exceedingly humble and had set himself to minister to the saints. In verse 16 the apostle further said, 'You also be subject to such ones, and to everyone co-working and laboring.' [Emphasis Added]

"In the church the woman also has to submit to the man. First Corinthians 11:3 says, 'But I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ.' God appointed man to be the authority as a type of Christ and the woman to submit

as a type of the church. For this reason the woman should have authority on her head for the sake of the angels. Furthermore, the woman must submit to her husband. [Emphasis Added]

The problem with us very often is that we have no problem submitting to God directly, but we have problem submitting to those whom God has set up as His representative authority for us to submit to. This is especially true since God's delegated authorities are men who are not perfect, and there is a strong temptation for us to question the authority just like Miriam murmured against Moses. However, we need to see and realize the dignity of a deputy authority in spiritual matters. It cannot be reviled. In the very chapter the sister was quoting from, Brother Nee warned us that:

“The ones who revile will lose their spiritual power.”

He continued regarding having confidence in God's delegated authority by saying:

“We should be confident in submitting to the authority which God is confident in establishing. If there is a mistake, it is not our mistake. It is the mistake of the authority. The Lord says that every person should be subject to the authorities over him (Rom. 13:1). There is more difficulty on God's part than on our part. When God trusts man, we can as well. When God is confident about His trust, we should be even more so.”

He further elaborated in this regard:

“Some may say, ‘What happens if the authority makes mistakes?’ If God dares to trust those who are entrusted as authorities, then we should dare to submit. Whether or not the authority makes mistakes has nothing to do with us. In other words, whether the deputy authority is right or wrong is a matter for which he has to be responsible directly before the Lord. Those who submit to authority need only to submit absolutely. Even if they make a mistake through submission, the Lord will not reckon that as sin. The Lord will hold the deputy authority responsible for that sin. To disobey is to rebel. For this the submitting one has to be responsible before God. For this reason there is no human element involved in submission. If we are only submitting to a person, the meaning of authority is lost. Moreover, since God has already set up His deputy authority, He must maintain this authority. Whether or not others are right is their business. Whether or not I am right is my business. Everyone has to be responsible to the Lord for himself.”

How serious this is! To reject a deputy authority is to reject God Himself. In God's eyes all those who rejected His servants rejected Him. We cannot hearken to God's word, yet refuse the word of His deputy authority. We have to submit to God's authority as well as to His deputy authority. There is no need for humility for one to submit to God's direct authority. But there must be humility and brokenness for one to submit to the deputy authority. Only by laying the flesh completely aside can one accept and obey the deputy authority.

Paul learned this principle immediately upon his conversion, because the Lord sent Ananias, a small member of the Body, as the delegated authority to him. We need to learn

this lesson as well. Brother Nee explained that what God looks at is not His own direct authority. He looks at His established, indirect authorities. All those who do not submit to God's indirect authorities cannot submit to God's direct authority.

Actually, there are not two authorities but in God's eyes it is just one authority. We cannot despise authority in the family and, much more, in the church. We cannot despise any deputy authority. It is impossible for us to reject the deputy authority and to submit to God directly. It is a serious matter to reject God's deputy authority. Brother Nee was emphatic about this matter:

“This is because the rejection of deputy authority is a rejection of the Lord Himself. Only foolish ones will want the deputy authority to fail. He who dislikes God's representative dislikes God Himself. Man's rebellious nature likes to submit to God's direct authority, but reject God's appointed deputy authority.”

Brother Nee stressed that God honors His deputy authority in the conclusion of chapter 7, saying:

“Man cannot overstep the deputy authority to submit to the direct authority. Since God has handed out His authority, even He Himself will not overstep His deputy authority. Even He Himself is bound by the deputy authority. God establishes through the establishment of the deputy authority, and He annuls through the annulling of the deputy authority. God wants to maintain His deputy authority. Therefore, we have only one way with the deputy authority, which is the way of submission.”

This means that as ordained by God in the church order, it is imperative for us to submit to the elders in the church, the younger saints to the elderly, sisters to brothers, and wives to their husbands.

AUTHORITY AND SUBMISSION IN THE BODY

In chapter 8, Brother Nee continued with his burden in chapter 7 by emphasizing the need for authority and submission in the Body, which is the church. It is both spontaneous and harmonious for the Body to submit to the Head. The church life is a living in the operation of God's authority; there should be a very spontaneous submission. The church is not only the place of fellowship for the brothers and sisters; it is also the place for the manifestation of authority.

In this chapter, he *adds* to the list of delegated authorities he enumerated in chapter 7. He speaks of the authority in the members, and of delegated function being deputy authority. While this was very much emphasized in chapter 8, this by no means repeals his words in chapter 7 that the elders, the elderly saints, and the brothers are delegated authorities in the church. Why the sister excluded them when teaching about representative authorities in the church is not beyond comprehension.

From our other articles, we have presented a pattern in the sister's other writings where she repeatedly misquoted brothers Nee and Lee so that they appear to be supporting her teachings. She does this either by interspersing her thoughts with those of brothers Nee and Lee, thus misleading readers, or by deforming quotes by taking only those that can

support her claims, even if the items she ignored are right in the same pages she is quoting from.

Consider the example of her quoting Brother Nee in this particular case. Because she takes exception with the elders in her locality and has been sowing discord and disaffection towards them, she conveniently omitted Brother Nee's opening and all important word in chapter 7 where he plainly identifies the elders as the first group of people God has appointed as delegated authority that he emphasized "*all must submit to.*" Instead, she focuses her colored lenses only on chapter 8, identifying deputy authority as being *only* in the members and in their delegated function, thereby presenting a half-truth.

The reason for this blatant oversight is obvious in that she herself does not respect or submit to the elders of the church where she meets, and in fact often disagrees with them in public, contradicts the elders' decisions, and even encourages the saints to be selective in their submission to the leading ones. While reviling the God-established authorities in the church and in the work, she parades her credentials, past labors and uplifts her work and function, even claiming to be the authority in the church and in the work with the budding rod of Aaron to lecture the co-workers and elders with her different teachings and redefinitions of various truths.

Ironically, while the sister teaches concerning authority and submission in the Body, she herself neither recognizes nor submits to the delegated authorities of God in the church as identified by Brother Nee in the very chapters she is quoting from, missing the very burden of Brother Nee's word and misrepresenting his view and teaching to her readers.

Finally, in the concluding portion of chapter 8, Brother Nee admonished us:

“The Lord has taught us not only to learn submission in the family and in the world, but also in the Body, in the church. If we learn submission well in the Body, we will learn it well everywhere else. This is the only place to start. Hence, the church is the place of testing. It is also the place of perfection. If we do not learn well here, anything done elsewhere will not be successful. If the lesson is learned well in the church, the problem of the kingdom is solved, the problems in the world will be solved, and the problems in the universe will be solved.”

Brother Nee's word is very sobering. The church is the kingdom of God. If we do not learn the lesson of submission to authority, our rebellion will cost us the kingdom reward in the next age. For a normal church life, we need to learn the lesson of authority and submission in the church. God has set delegated authorities over us in the church – not only the authority in the members or the delegated function of the members, but foremost of all, He has appointed elders whom all must submit to, the elderly whom the young men must submit to, brothers whom the sisters in the church must submit to, and husbands to whom their wives must submit to.

CONCLUSION

In the matter of the authority in the Body, first and foremost is the need for the authority of the Head flowing throughout the whole Body (Eph. 5:23-24). In addition to Christ's

direct authority, for the carrying out of His divine economy, He has set up His deputy authority on earth. There is deputy authority in our family life; the parents are the deputy authority to the children (Eph. 6:1), and the husbands are the deputy authority to the wives (Eph. 5:23). Paul even says that a wife should fear her husband (Eph. 5:33). For a wife to fear her husband means that she takes him as the deputy authority. Even in a small family there is deputy authority; then how much more should there be deputy authority in the church.

According to the divine revelation in the holy Word, God has ordained His deputy authority both in the Old Testament, such as with Joseph, David, and Moses, and the priests like Samuel and others who taught the people the divine oracle, and in the New Testament, such as with the elders, who take care of the church (1 Tim. 3:5; 5:17; Heb. 13:17; Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5), the apostles, who establish the churches and teach the saints (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10; Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 4:21; 12:28), and the leading co-workers (1 Cor. 3:10a).

First, we need to realize that we must submit to the authority of the Head. Then we need to know whose authority we should submit to and who is in authority over us. God's government in the universe depends on God's authority. In the same way, the church's government also depends on the church's authority. The New Testament shows us clearly that the authority of the church is entrusted to the elders and is completely in the hands of the elders. Although the elders are appointed by the apostles, God has not entrusted the authority of the church to the hands of the apostles.

A local church is under the authority of Christ as the Head, represented by the elders. Hence, the saints in a local church should obey the elders (Heb. 13:17). The churches as the Body of Christ are under their Head, Christ, represented by the apostles. Hence, the churches should obey the apostles (2 Cor. 2:9; 7:15; 10:6). To obey the elders in a local church and to obey the apostles among the churches does not mean that the obeying one does not need to obey the Lord directly. When he is seeking the leading directly from the Lord, he should also take care of the elders in the local church, because he is living and working in the church as a part of the Body. We all need to realize that in our natural life we are very independent. So, to take care of obeying both the Lord and the elders or the apostles at the same time is not an easy thing for us. Hence, we may unconsciously feel that the teaching concerning the obeying of God's deputy authority is overly stressed or even unscriptural. In any case, to say that there is no deputy authority of the Lord is surely unscriptural.

The fear within those who are not willing to obey the elders in a local church or the apostles in the churches might, according to their feeling, bring their conscience into bondage. Any kind of fear that causes the saints to feel bound in their conscience and not free to do whatever they feel led of the Lord is not needed or healthy. Such a fear might be due to the saints' independence, or to their unwillingness to be one with the elders, or to their holding a view concerning the church life which is different from the view held generally by the church. If it is due to the saints' independence, then the saints need to learn how to live the Body life; if it is due to the saints' unwillingness to be one with the elders, then they need to learn more concerning how to be in one accord with the elders in the church life; if they are holding a different view than the church's view, then they need to learn more lessons that they may go along with the church or the churches in the Lord's recovery. Regardless of what the fear is due to, it is always better to obey the elders

in a church or the apostles among the churches at the same time as one obeys the Lord, rather than to obey only the Lord without caring for the elders in the church or the apostles among the churches. All the saints need to be ushered into a Body-consciousness and to be helped to pay the price of giving up their independence, their freedom to be different, and their subjective view, so that the Body of Christ can be built up in the Lord's way.

Submitting to the authority of the elders is essential to keep the oneness for the building up of the Body. The elders are the more mature brothers in each locality appointed by the apostles to shepherd and perfect the church. Not being one with the elders and not submitting to their authority leads to spiritual suicide. A local church not in fellowship with the apostles cannot go on. Likewise, saints that do not submit to the authority of the elders cannot be built up. Our God is not a God of confusion. He has established the proper order in the Body.

We obey the elders because we submit to the authority of the Head. We are not submitting to the authority of man but to Christ, the Head of the church, recognizing His authority in the church. Elders do not have authority of themselves, but they are the deputy authority of the Lord to care for the churches. The saints should not fear the elders but should fellowship with them continually and be open to receive their fellowship, realizing that the elders have been appointed by the Lord to shepherd the church. By submitting to the authority of the elders, all the saints will be shepherded into life and be perfected to build up the church.

Although we know that we should submit to the authority of the elders and the older saints, sometimes nothing can force us to submit to them. Our ability to submit to authority depends on the lessons we have learned from the Lord's hand by being broken by the Lord. If we have not learned many lessons of being dealt with by the Lord, authority and order are out of the question, and coordination is basically nonexistent. Not only so, we also need much grace to submit to the elders. There is the need for some to be the elders, and there is the need for others to submit to the elders.

Two particular characteristics, or two signs, of a Nazarite are, first, that he does not touch any worldly pleasure and, second, that he always keeps himself under some authority. These are solemn matters. As those who would be absolute for God, we must abstain from earthly pleasure. Furthermore, we must not shave our head; that is, we must respect authority and remain under the headship of our Lord in every way.

May we truly be today's Nazarites who overcome both the pleasure and the rebellion of this fallen world as overcomers in times of apostasy so that we would be acknowledged and rewarded by the Lord in His return. Referring to the overcomers in Sardis in Revelation 3:5, Brother Nee's exposition makes a fitting conclusion:

“And I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.’ The Lord did not say that He will confess the overcomer's name before the world. Perhaps the world will not know them, yet before the Father, He will confess their names, because the Father sees everything in secret (Matt. 6:6). He will also confess their names before the Father's angels. The angels are paying attention to their conduct. They even notice when a female believer covers her head (1 Cor. 11:10). Although it seems a small thing to be separated

from the sin of the Protestant church, and perhaps men would despise this, in that day, the Lord will extol the names of these believers before the Father and before the heavenly hosts. What a promise this is! The Lord will confess our names! If we are faithful, one day our Lord will call forth our humble names before the myriads of angels and before the Father! Our neglected and despised names will be in the mouth of the Lord and in the ear of the Father and His angels, as well as in the book of life. How wonderful this is! May everyone of us have an ear to hear the Lord's word to Sardis, and may none of us be lacking in the characteristics of the overcomers in Sardis.” (W. Nee, *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, (Set 1) Vol. 05: The Christian (3), Chapter 2, Section 17, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

Excerpts from the Ministry

The Elders Being the Deputy Authority in the Church

“The elders are the authorities in the local church. All the brothers have to submit to the **elders**. Titus 1 speaks of basic qualifications of an elder—self-control and submission.... God never appoints a person who loves to be the first among others (like Diotrephes) to be an elder. The elders are the highest deputy authority in a local church. For this reason they must be men with self-control.” (W. Nee, *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, (Set 3) Vol. 47: The Orthodoxy of the Church & Authority and Submission, Chapter 33, Section 2, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“God has appointed authorities in many places. In the family there are husbands, parents, and masters. Above us there are rulers and officers. In the church there are elders and workers. Each deputy authority has his own requirements.” (W. Nee, *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, (Set 3) Vol. 47: The Orthodoxy of the Church & Authority and Submission, Chapter 33, Section 1, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“Among the **elders** there are always some who are more senior and more respected than others. They are the ones who should take the lead.... There is an explicit injunction in the Bible to submit to elders and apostles. However, nothing is legal among us. We cannot say that we cannot find our deputy authority because God has not explicitly pointed him out to us. If we have not met or found our deputy authority, it simply means that we are, in Peter's words, animals without reason. No remark can be stronger than this one. If someone wants to offend authority, let him offend; but as for us, we choose to submit absolutely. The Lord rebukes the antagonizers. They either fall down or slide back. If they remain in the church, we can ignore them, mark them out, and refuse to communicate with them. God will eventually prevail, and the brothers and sisters will eventually take this way.” (W. Nee, *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, (Set 3) Vol. 59: Miscellaneous Records of the Kuling Training (1), Chapter 24, Section 3, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“Yesterday we quoted some examples from the Old Testament to illustrate the matter of rebellion. Even though Moses was wrong when he married the Cushite woman, his sister and brother should not have reviled him rashly because he was God's deputy authority. A deputy authority may be wrong, but it is not our business to criticize him. Our business is to submit to authority. Whether or not masters, husbands, parents, and

those in authority have a problem in themselves is not our concern. We need to know only one thing: If we do not submit to them, we have a problem. A person who tries to confront God's deputy authority always runs into problems. We may think that our master or our husband is not as good as we are. This thought exists because we have touched these people only. When we only touch people, we encounter problems. But if we touch authority, we will not have a problem. Some servants only touch their masters. Some children only touch their parents. Some only touch their brothers and sisters. These ones do not have a way to go on because they are only touching men; they have not touched authority and are not willing to yield. A person is useless if he continues to criticize the government, those in authority, parents, superiors, or **elders** in the church. All of his spiritual power will leak away. He is taking the way of Satan and acting according to his principle.

“Since the beginning of the world, God has been ruling and upholding the entire universe with His authority. Both man's fall and the fall of the universe had their source in rebellion. Rebellion has thrown off authority. If we do not deal with this basic issue, we will be useless no matter where we go. We will be unable to work in any place. We cannot preach the gospel of Christ and perform God's work or service while taking Satan's way and maintaining his principle. Once we touch and apprehend God's authority, we will know that God created and maintains the universe by His authority. He has placed His system of authority in everything. We have to uphold the system God has ordained. We have to learn to submit to men and not to touch authority in a light way.... We have to see that every authority is from God. Only a rebellious and proud man is blind to authority; only he will not submit to God's deputy authority. If we cannot submit to His deputy authority, or if we say that we do not sense God's authority on earth today, we are not qualified to touch God's work; we cannot work for the Lord.” (*W. Nee, The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, (Set 3) Vol. 59: Miscellaneous Records of the Kuling Training (1), Chapter 15, Section 4, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“First Timothy 5:17 says, ‘Let the **elders** who take the lead well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and teaching.’ You must render double honor toward those **elders** who take the lead well in the church and should never despise or criticize them. You should honor the **elders**, even more those who labor in word and teaching. You should also honor those who have the gift of the ministry of the word. Some **elders** can fulfill the ministry of the word and some cannot. You should honor not only those who can fulfill such a ministry but also those who cannot.

“We have seen that the oneness of the Body is authority itself. We have also seen that one person, two or three persons, or a local church, can represent the Body of Christ. Finally, we have seen that the **elders** in the Lord, those who take the lead among us, also represent the Body of Christ. All of these constitute God's authority. They are the deputy authority of God among us, and we must submit to them and honor them. We must inquire of them and listen to them. If we practice this, the Lord's name and His word will be magnified in our midst, and we will be Philadelphia indeed.” (*W. Nee, The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, (Set 3) Vol. 50: Messages for Building Up New Believers (3), Chapter 16, Section 10, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“God shows us through the Bible that the brothers who are bearing responsibility before the Lord, who are called overseers, and who serve as the **elders**, are the ones who represent His authority in the church. The rest of the brothers must learn to take a

submissive stand before God. God has established authorities in the church; their work is to oversee the church. All the brothers must learn to accept their judgments and submit to them.

“Everyone among us should learn submission. It is pitiful for a person to have never submitted to anyone his whole life. We must learn to submit to God, and not to Him only, but also to the authority God has appointed on earth—the church. We must submit to God’s ordained authority in the church, that is, the **responsible brothers.** We can boast of the many years we have worked for the Lord, but we cannot boast of our obedience to the Lord. We have never been submissive to anyone. This is the basic problem and the basic challenge before us. If we consider this matter carefully before the Lord, we will realize that this kind of submission is mandatory in the church.

“We must be subject to the deputy authority of God in the church....I would like to point out that many brothers hold a wrong concept about submission; they choose the kind of people they will submit to. They think they should submit to only perfect individuals. Please bear in mind that this is not the Lord’s ordained way. We do not submit only to those who are perfect. We submit rather to the authority the Lord has placed over us. If it were up to us to choose a person to submit to, we would never find such a person on earth, because we would always find faults. Even if Peter appeared in our midst, we would still find many faults in him. Only one thing is necessary for our submission; if a brother is before us in the Lord, we should listen to him.” (*W. Nee, Messages for Building Up New Believers, Vol. 3, Chapter 16, Section 9, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“We have seen that the oneness of the Body is authority itself. We have also seen that one person, two or three persons, or a local church, can represent the Body of Christ. Finally, we have seen that the **elders in the Lord, those who take the lead among us, also represent the Body of Christ.** All of these constitute God’s authority. They are the deputy authority of God among us, and we must submit to them and honor them. We must inquire of them and listen to them. If we practice this, the Lord’s name and His word will be magnified in our midst, and we will be Philadelphia indeed.” (*W. Nee, Messages for Building Up New Believers, Vol. 3, Chapter 16, Section 10, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“God builds His church upon His authority. He has appointed deputy authority in all human government and institutions. All the brothers and sisters in the church have to learn to submit to the authority of the **elders.** We obey the **elders** because they are the Lord's deputy authority in the church. The basic principle governing Christian conduct on this earth is submission. It is interesting that believers are exhorted to obey in all the Epistles, but these Epistles do not say anything about authority itself. Where there is a demand, there must be the object of demand.... Similarly, if there is no authority, there can be no submission. God wants all the believers to practice submission in the church. This means that there must be an object of submission. The object of submission is the authority in the church. In the church the **elders** act as God's deputy authority. God wants us to learn submission. If a man truly knows authority, he will learn to submit.... [I]t is a spontaneous reaction that comes when a person is confronted by something. If we have a proper response, the first thing that will come to our mind when we are confronted by a situation is, ‘Who should I check with in this situation?’” (*W. Nee, The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, (Set 3) Vol. 61: Matured Leadings in the Lord's Recovery (1), Chapter 20, Section 3, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“Brother Nee answered: The authority of the local church is in the hands of the **elders**, whereas the authority of the work is in the hands of the apostles.” (W. Lee, *Messages Given During the Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry (2 volume set), Chapter 78, Section 3, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“Submitting to the authority of the **elders** is essential to keep the oneness for the building up of the Body. The **elders** are the more mature brothers in each locality appointed by the apostles to shepherd and perfect the church. Not being one with the **elders** and not submitting to their authority leads to spiritual suicide. A local church not in fellowship with the apostles cannot go on. Likewise, saints that do not submit to the authority of the **elders** cannot be built up. Our God is not a God of confusion. He has established the proper order in the Body. **Elders** do not have authority of themselves, but they are the deputy authority of the Lord to care for the churches. The saints should not fear the elders but should fellowship with them continually and be open to receive their fellowship, realizing that the **elders** have been appointed by the Lord to shepherd the church. By submitting to the authority of the **elders**, all the saints will be shepherded into life and be perfected to build up the church.” (W. Lee, *Lesson Book, Level 5: The Church—The Vision and Building Up of the Church, Chapter 15, Section 6, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“First of all, we must submit to the authority of the Head. Then we need to know whose authority we should submit to and who is in authority over us. Although we know that we should submit to the authority of the **elders** and the older saints, sometimes nothing can force us to submit to them. Our ability to submit to authority depends on the lessons we have learned from the Lord's hand by being torn down by the Lord. If we have not learned many lessons of being broken by the Lord, authority and order are out of the question, and coordination is basically nonexistent.” (W. Lee, *The Church as the Body of Christ, Chapter 16, Section 2, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“Not only so, we also need much grace to submit to the **elders**. There is the need to be the **elders**, and there is the need to submit to the **elders**.” (W. Lee, *Basic Principles for the Practice of the Church Life, Chapter 2, Section 5, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“We obey the **elders** because we submit to the authority of the Head. We are not submitting to the authority of man but to Christ, the Head of the church, recognizing His authority in the church.” (W. Lee, *The Organization of the Church, p. 40, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“God's government in the universe depends on God's authority. In the same way, the church's government also depends on the church's authority. The New Testament shows us clearly that the authority of the church is entrusted to the **elders** and is completely in the hands of the **elders**. Although the **elders** are appointed by the apostles, God has not entrusted the authority of the church to the hands of the apostles. The Apostle Paul could set up **elders** in the church, but when the matter of excommunication was to be carried out, Paul did not have the direct authority to excommunicate others. The authority of excommunication was in the hands of the **elders** in Corinth. The apostles do not have direct authority to deal with matters of the church. All the authority in the church is entrusted to the **elders**.” (W. Lee, *The Elders' Management of the Church, Chapter 1, Section 9, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“Let us apply this matter of deputy authority to the church. Is there deputy authority in the church? If there is no deputy authority in the church, why are there **elders**? Recently, some have said that there is no deputy authority in the New Testament. If such a claim is true, why does the New Testament tell us that there are **elders** in the churches? Surely, Christ is the Head, and the authority is the Spirit, but we still need elders in the church. Without elders, the church would be in anarchy.” (W. Lee, *Life-Study of Numbers, Chapter 8, Section 3, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“In the matter of the authority in the Body, first and foremost is the need for the authority of the Head flowing throughout the whole Body (Eph. 5:23-24). In addition, there is deputy authority. In the local churches there are the elders (1 Tim. 5:17a), and in the work there are the leading co-workers (1 Cor. 3:10a). All these are deputy authorities, carrying out the authority of the Head.” (W. Lee, *The Oneness and the One Accord according to the Lord's Aspiration and the Body Life and Service according to His Pleasure, Chapter 3, Section 4, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“The opposing ones have also rejected the truth concerning deputy authority, claiming that they are under the direct headship of Christ. This is nonsense. All of the people ruling in the government are deputy authorities under God (Rom. 13:1-7).... According to the divine revelation in the holy Word, there is also deputy authority in God's economy, both in the Old Testament, such as with Moses and the priests who taught the people the divine oracle, and in the New Testament, such as with the elders, who take care of the church (1 Tim. 3:5; 5:17; Heb. 13:17), and the apostles, who establish the churches and teach the saints (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10; 1 Cor. 4:21). In Hebrews 13:17 Paul said, ‘Obey the ones leading you and submit to them.’” (W. Lee, *The Practice of the Church Life according to the God-ordained Way, Chapter 3, Section 4, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“In the ark of testimony there is also the budding rod, signifying our experience of Christ as our acceptance by God in resurrection life for authority in the God-given ministry (Num. 17:3, 5, 8, 10).... It is the same today. The elders and ministers of the divine Word must have the authority which comes from resurrection life. The incense altar only signifies our acceptance in Christ by God, whereas the budding rod not only signifies Christ as our acceptance by God but also Christ as our authority given by God in His resurrection life.” (W. Lee, *Life-Study of Hebrews, Chapter 40, Section 3, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“Verse 21 says, ‘I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus and the chosen angels that you guard these things without prejudice, doing nothing by way of partiality.’ The elders in a local church are God's deputy authority. Dealing with them is a solemn thing before God. Hence, the apostle solemnly charged Timothy before God, Christ, and the angels to do it in such a way that the chosen angels, the good angels with God's authority, may see that His authority is established and maintained among His redeemed people on earth.” (W. Lee, *Life-Study of 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon, Chapter 10, Section 2, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“From reading the Scriptures we can also see that there is deputy authority in the church.... [I]n the church there were some who were deputy authorities, spiritual leaders in the church. Telling the problem to God's representative authorities in the church equals telling it to the church.

“Acts 7 mentions that the offerings of material goods in the church were committed to the **elders**. This is proof that the **elders** are the deputy authorities in the church. They have the authority to handle and decide the affairs of the church. Then in the Epistles the apostles explicitly said that the **elders** are a group of people who oversee the church. The administrative power in the church is altogether upon them. Therefore, the **elders** are without a doubt the deputy authorities that God has established in the church.” (W. Lee, *The Vision of the Building of the Church, Chapter 10, Section 5, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

“According to the divine revelation in the holy Word, there is deputy authority in God’s economy, both in the Old Testament, such as with Moses and the priests who taught the people the divine oracle, and in the New Testament, such as with the **elders**, who take care of the church (1 Tim. 3:5; 5:17; Heb. 13:17), and the apostles, who establish the churches and teach the saints (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10; 1 Cor. 4:21). A local church is under the authority of Christ as the Head, represented by the **elders**. Hence, the saints in a local church should obey the **elders** (Heb. 13:17). The churches as the Body of Christ are under their Head, Christ, represented by the apostles. Hence, the churches should obey the apostles (2 Cor. 2:9; 7:15; 10:6). To obey the **elders** in a local church and to obey the apostles among the churches does not mean that the obeying one does not need to obey the Lord directly. When he is seeking the leading directly from the Lord, he should also take care of the **elders** in the local church, because he is living and working in the church as a part of the Body.... We all need to realize that in our natural life we are very independent. So, to take care of obeying both the Lord and the **elders** or the apostles at the same time is not an easy thing for us. Hence, we may unconsciously feel that the teaching concerning the obeying of God’s deputy authority is overly stressed or even unscriptural. In any case, to say that there is no deputy authority of the Lord is surely unscriptural.

“The fear within those who are not willing to obey the **elders** in a local church or the apostles in the churches might, according to their feeling, bring their conscience into bondage. Any kind of fear that causes the saints to feel bound in their conscience and not free to do whatever they feel led of the Lord is not needed or healthy. Such a fear might be due to the saints’ independence, or to their unwillingness to be one with the **elders**, or to their holding of a view concerning the church life which is different from the view held generally by the church. If it is due to the saints’ independence, then the saints need to learn how to live the Body life; if it is due to the saints’ unwillingness to be one with the **elders**, then they need to learn more concerning how to be in one accord with the **elders** in the church life; if they are holding a different view than the church’s view, then they need to learn more lessons that they may go along with the church or the churches in the Lord’s recovery. Regardless of what the fear is due to, it is always better to obey the **elders** in a church or the apostles among the churches at the same time as one obeys the Lord, rather than to obey only the Lord without caring for the **elders** in the church or the apostles among the churches. All the saints need to be ushered into a Body-consciousness and to be helped to pay the price of the giving up of their independence, their freedom to be different, and their subjective view, so that the Body of Christ can be built up in the Lord’s way.” (W. Lee, *The Intrinsic Problem in the Lord's Recovery Today and Its Scriptural Remedy, Chapter 4, Section 7, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

(May 15, 2010)