

LSM's Etymological Errors

A Little Knowledge of Greek is Dangerous

Summary: Witness Lee had only a rudimentary, self-taught knowledge of NT Greek. He relied on outdated word studies (Alford, Vincent, Vine & Kittel). These traits plus a dismissive attitude towards scholarship and boundless self-confidence made him liable to etymological errors and exegetical fallacies. LSM was ignorant of the revolution in biblical linguistics since 1960 which exposed these errors & fallacies. Analysing LSM's publications we illustrate cases of the etymological root fallacy, invalid word-dissections, the reverse etymological fallacy, illegitimate totality transfer, the selective evidence fallacy, the word-concept fallacy & the unwarranted associative fallacy. E.g.s presented include key Greek words—*ekklesia*, *oikonomia*, *parakletos*, *dunamis*, *proginosko*, *Laodicea*, *Nicolaitans*, *oida/ginosko*, *logos/rhema* & *agapao/phileo*. Such exegetical fallacies & etymological errors undermine the value of LSM's *NT Recovery Version & Life-study* commentaries.

Witness Lee (1905--1997) possessed many gifts, attested by his voluminous publications and his institutional legacy--LSM's global network of local churches. However, competence in biblical languages (OT Hebrew & NT Greek) was not one of his strengths. W. Lee's facility in biblical languages was marked by four characteristics:

[1] No formal training. W. Lee acknowledged that,⁰ “neither Brother Nee nor I studied in a seminary.” “I have not studied Greek in any school,”¹ he conceded, and,² “I never took a Greek class; neither was I taught...I am not a Greek scholar.” W. Lee had a rudimentary, self-taught, knowledge of NT Greek. He knew no Hebrew.

[2] With only limited Greek, W. Lee relied on reference tools. He says,³ “We did not study Greek, yet we had dictionaries, lexicons, and concordances to help us....” W. Lee alleged he used the “best reference books.” He asserted,⁴ “Although I am not a Greek scholar, my explanation of the NT Greek is based on the study of past Greek scholars. The Greek commentaries...I regularly use are *the best & the most authoritative*.” Despite these claims, a closer look shows his sources were badly outdated. W. Lee's writings⁵ refer to works by John N. Darby (1800-- 88), Henry Alford (1810 – 71), Marvin Vincent (1834—1922), W. E. Vine (1873 – 1949), Kenneth Wuest (1893 – 1962) and Gerhard Kittel⁶ (1888 – 1948). Most of these commentaries and word-studies date from the 19th century; only one is post-World War 2. Plus W. Lee adopted Watchman Nee's views which mostly relied on 19th-century scholars—Darby, Alford, etc.⁷ There is no evidence W. Lee used contemporary resources.

[3] A dismissive attitude towards contemporary Christian scholarship. W. Lee alleged that,⁸ “Since 1945 until the present there has not been a publication with spiritual weight in English or in Chinese. Many Christian publications are being printed, but they...lack content concerning the divine life, the truth, & Bible exposition.”

[4] Boundless self-confidence, despite his limited training and obsolete resources. W. Lee avowed,⁹ “Even though I do not understand Greek literature, I can be considered an expert on the usage of Greek words.” Plus he asserted, “I have studied every word in the New Testament. I wrote books...according to a scholarly standard in which every finding is grounded with evidence.”¹⁰ These are bold assertions for an ‘amateur.’

Given this combination of traits it is not surprising that errors were committed and fallacies perpetuated. Witness Lee had “helpers” with greater facility in biblical languages to assist him in avoiding such pitfalls. However, due to the Recovery's focus on the “Minister of the Age with the Vision of the Age,” these ‘helpers’ functioned as W. Lee's “cheer-leaders,” rather than correctives. This bias is evident in LSM's *Affirmation & Critique* which invariably affirms Witness Lee's teachings, while critiquing other scholars and expositors.

50 years ago a revolution occurred which “shook the foundations of...attempts to do theology in the form of word studies.”¹¹ Since then biblical scholars have highlighted the exegetical fallacies and etymological errors which blighted expositions based on earlier reference works by Alford, Darby, Vincent, Vine, Kittel and their peers. Consider G. Kittel's multi-volume work. W. Lee commends it saying,¹² “The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* written by Gerhard Kittel...contain[s] deep analysis on the meaning and usage of every significant word in the NT.” However, K. A. Cherney Jr. concludes “flawed linguistic principles underlie Kittel's *TDNT*.”¹³ and Prof. Stanley E. Porter advises,¹⁴ “this source should be avoided for discussion of meaning...” These warnings run counter to W. Lee's declaration,¹⁵ “I consult this set of books the most. As a result I can cut straight the word of the truth according to the Greek language when I expound the New Testament.”

This essay evaluates LSM's works in terms of recent linguistic research. We cite respected biblical scholars with impeccable evangelical credentials. These are not "ivory tower academics in liberal seminaries" who seek to undermine the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith or cast doubt on the veracity of God's Word. For e.g. we quote from Prof. D. A. Carson's *Exegetical Fallacies* (1984). Dr. Carson is research professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Deerfield, IL.) and a founding council member of the Gospel Coalition. Dr. Craig L. Blomberg is Distinguished Professor of the New Testament at Denver Seminary (CO). Prof. Blomberg stands firmly in the conservative evangelical tradition, and has written extensively on the historical reliability of the Gospels. We cite his *Handbook of NT Exegesis* (2010). Other scholars cited could be equally commended.

Etymology

Etymology is the study of a word's origin and the historical development of its meaning over time.¹⁶ Earlier biblical word studies often appealed to the 'root' or 'original' meaning of a Greek (or Hebrew) word. W. Lee employs etymology, for example, when expounding Paul's statement that he "obtained *help*...from God" (Acts 26:22). He says,¹⁷ "The Greek word [rendered 'help'] originally meant *alliance*. This implies that the apostle was allied with God and realized God's assistance in this alliance." This exposition implicitly assumes that the 'root' meaning of the word rendered 'help' [Greek: *epikourias*], originating generations earlier, with the sense of 'alliance,' remained embodied in the word and this connotation was understood by both the biblical author and his first readers. In this particular instance that may indeed be true. However, clearly this is not always the case. The meanings of words tend to evolve over time, so that later meanings may diverge, or even contradict the original ('root') meaning. To illustrate, the terms "nephew" and "niece" derive from Old French words which meant "grandson" & "grand-daughter" (respectively) prior to 1600. Today, in contrast, these terms refer to a sibling's son or daughter. More striking, the English word "nice" is said to be derived from the Latin *nescius*, meaning ignorant. It is safe to assume that in modern use the term, 'nice' is not intended to convey the original meaning, 'ignorant.' In such cases, the etymological root meaning is misleading; it hinders, rather than helps our understanding. Similar pitfalls exist in the Greek language of the New Testament.

Etymological Errors

In recent decades scholars have sought to correct the erroneous assumptions underlying earlier word-studies. As Professor Anthony Thiselton observes,¹⁸ "Many writers, including a number of biblical scholars, believe that the etymological meaning of a word is somehow its 'basic' or 'proper' meaning." This "mistaken" and "false assumption" that "questions about etymology somehow relate to the real or 'basic' meaning of a word,"¹⁹ led NT Greek scholars like Alford, Kittel, Vincent, Vine, etc., to emphasize the 'root' or original meaning of Greek words. Their pronouncements are particularly alluring to expositors with little linguistic skill, yet who seek the "deeper, hidden, intrinsic significance" of Scripture. Moreover, statements like "according to Dean Alford, (Vincent, or Vine) the root of this Greek word means..." tend to be treated as authoritative by audiences with limited knowledge of biblical languages. W. Lee's writings reflect this misplaced emphasis on the root meaning of Greek words. He asserts, for example, that if "Bible [translators] do not have an accurate understanding of the *original meanings* of the words in the Bible, then their translation will surely contain mistakes."²⁰

"The standard reference tools used in New Testament studies were written before the advent and certainly before the development of modern linguistics,"²¹ writes Prof. Stanley E. Porter. As a result they were prone to error. Prof. Grant R. Osborne observes regarding Greek word-studies, that,²² "previously, scholars thought that the meaning of a word could be found in its historical development," traced back to an original root. Hence, "until recently scholars believed that the key to a word's meaning lay in its origin and history. This assumption of linear development lay behind the misuse of etymology, wherein any past use of a word could be read into its current meaning."²³ Word Studies typically assumed that a single basic meaning had been transmitted from the word's original root to its current conjugates. Prof Osborne notes that,²⁴ "many of the older lexicons (such as Thayer's Greek lexicon) and word study books (such as Vincent, Vine or Wuest) assumed" each Greek word derived from a 'root' which had "a universal meaning that can be transferred across time," to its use in the New Testament. Given a direct link between the 'root' and a word's current meaning (and absent any significant

intervening change) etymology yields the word's 'true meaning.' But today NT scholars affirm that these are "previously-held *ideas that do not work*,"²⁵ Prof. Osborne reports. Since meanings often change over time, it is an etymological error to assume that the origin of a word is its true meaning, that a word's root is its 'real meaning.'²⁶ As Prof. Thiselton warns,²⁷ "the etymology of a word is not a statement about its meaning but about its history. Hundreds of words diverge from or even (like 'nice') oppose their etymology." The "main point," Prof. Osborne reminds us,²⁸ "is that the root meaning...is not a 'universal meaning' that permeates the whole ...We dare not assume any type of universal meaning for a root." Yet W. Lee's linguistic resources are often guilty of this offence. Kittel's *TDNT* "frequently indulged in...the root fallacy," warns Prof. Stanley E. Porter.²⁹

Exegetical Fallacy

Earlier New Testament Word Studies, which focussed on the roots of words, frequently fell into this pitfall. In his book, *Exegetical Fallacies*, Dr. D. A. Carson observes that,³⁰ "One of the most enduring fallacies, the root fallacy presupposes that every word[s]...meaning is determined by etymology; that is by the roots of a word." Grant R. Osborne concurs saying,³¹ "The root fallacy assumes that the root of a term...carries a basic meaning that is reflected in every subordinate use of the word." Similarly Prof. David Alan Black observes that,³² "New Testament commentators are often guilty of finding the 'real meaning' of a word merely by looking up its etymology, without paying attention to the context in which that word occurs...[This is] the fallacy of etymologizing, an over-emphasis on etymology." Aware of this fallacy, today's scholars conclude that, in general,³³ "the meaning of a word cannot be reliably determined by etymology," says Dr. D. A. Carson. Since the Greek language developed during the eons prior to the New Testament,³⁴ "We cannot presume that an author would necessarily be aware of a word's etymology. And [even] if he was, we cannot assume, without some evidence, that he intended his readers to grasp the connection," observes Dr. Moises Silva. To illustrate this point, consider an English example; the word "good-bye," comes from the Anglo-Saxon 'root', "God be with you." However, when someone says "good-bye," today, it does not necessarily (if ever) mean they are asking for God's presence to be with you. That 'root meaning' is a misleading indicator of the current meaning of 'good bye.' The same principle holds true for NT Greek words; appeal to a word's etymological root often hinders, rather than helps. The prevalence of this pitfall led the editors of the *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* to declare,³⁵ "Etymological studies...have become a menace to sound interpretation."

Etymology Occasionally Useful

While past studies overemphasized etymology, analysing a word's original meanings is not totally without merit. Contemporary scholars point out that *occasionally* a word's etymology is a useful guide to its meaning. Some people in Scripture were named based on the name's meaning (& perhaps its etymology)-- e.g. Jacob, Israel, Peter, etc.--not just family history (Lk. 1:61) or the name's sound. Sometimes a compound Greek word's meaning relates directly to its components. Dr. Robert Cara points out the Greek word *ekballō*, (often rendered "to cast out," e.g., Matt. 9:33), is a combination of 'throw' (*ballo*) and 'out' (*ek*). But, note that 'one exception does not prove the rule.' Professor Robert Cara emphasizes that even when a word's etymology and its current meaning dovetail together, the word's meaning ultimately derives from its current usage, not its etymology.³⁶

Contemporary New Testament scholars focus on a word's current ['synchronic'] meaning, at the time the New Testament was written, rather than its prior historical development. This focus is justified because the task of biblical exegesis is to³⁷ "answer the question: what *did* the biblical author *mean*?...what did the author *intend* his original readers to understand?" As Dr. Osborne states,³⁸ "In the past linguistic word studies centred on etymology and linguistic roots. Today, however, all recognize that semantics is based on synchronic [i.e., a word's current meaning] and structural considerations. The background of a word is a valid aspect *only when there is a deliberate allusion to a past use*..." This radical revision in biblical scholars' views is not reflected in W. Lee's expositions which rely on outdated reference books containing frequent etymological fallacies. He ³⁹ denigrated Christianity for being "stranded on the sands of superstition, superficiality, & lukewarm theology;" meanwhile his own expositions of Scripture were stranded on the shores of outdated & discredited linguistics.

Revolution in Biblical Linguistics

This seismic change in the analysis of biblical languages is not a recent development. It began over 50-years ago with the publication of Prof. James Barr's, *Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1961). Dr. Barr's landmark study amounted to "a reconstruction of descriptive biblical linguistics."⁴⁰ Barr's book "shook the foundations of...word studies, most notably the *TDNT*,"⁴¹ writes NT Professor Max Turner. Beginning with this work, Prof. James Barr pioneered the biblical semantics movement and "laid the foundations for a linguistically-oriented approach to biblical lexicography."⁴² Michael Wilkins calls this a 'revolution.' He writes, "Although word studies have historically been the common means for attempting to clarify the meaning of the biblical literature, modern lexicological...analysis has revolutionized such studies. The work of James Barr [1926-2006] has facilitated that revolution. Beginning with his *Semantics of Biblical Language* he criticizes the approach to lexicography which characterized much of the *TDNT*."⁴³ Professor Barr applied key principles of linguistics to challenge traditional etymology-based studies of words and critique the lexical approach of Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (*TDNT*). Barr's critique of G. Kittel's *TDNT* was devastating; "The major problems [Barr] identified [in *TDNT*] were a failure to distinguish adequately between a word and a concept; an over-reliance on etymology, including the 'root fallacy;' the errors of 'illegitimate identity transfer' and 'illegitimate totality transfer'; deciding the meaning of words independently of their use in sentences and discourse; and identifying theological thought in words, rather than word-combinations or sentences," writes Claire S. Smith.⁴⁴ Subsequent work has confirmed that "flawed linguistic principles underlie Kittel's *TDNT*."⁴⁵ In view of this, contemporary scholars counsel that "this source [Kittel] should be avoided for discussion of meaning..."⁴⁶ Yet LSM is wholly ignorant of these key developments. Ironically, W. Lee writes recommending Kittel's 10-volume, *TDNT*,⁴⁷ "I consult this set of books the most. As a result I can cut straight the word of the truth according to the Greek language when I expound the New Testament." The following sections highlight some of the etymological errors and exegetical fallacies which resulted from Witness Lee's flawed approach.

Examples of LSM's Etymological Errors

Example #1 *Ekklesia*—"Called-out Assembly"

The Greek word *Ekklesia* is a prime example of the error of etymologizing. Prof. James L. Boyer exemplifies the logical process which embodies this error. He writes,⁴⁸ "We may illustrate the [flawed] etymological approach to the study of words...The Greek word 'church' in the New Testament is *ekklesia*. This word is formed of two parts, the preposition *ek* meaning 'out of' and the root connected with the verb *kaleo*, 'to call.' Therefore, the etymology of the word suggests 'a called-out assembly.' From this point on the [interpretive] process...may go as far as the interpreter's sense of good judgment will let him. It is a select group, called out from among the rest of the world. Therefore also it is a separatist group. It is composed of those who are called, so it is involved in the doctrine of election. Since the calling involved a caller, and an actual call issued, therefore the church is an official constituted body rather than a heterogeneous mass of separatists. Perhaps you can go on further."

The precise content differs, but this commentary is strikingly similar to LSM's own exposition. W. Lee asserts,⁴⁹ "The Greek word translated 'church' in these verses is *ekklesia*, composed of two words: *ek*, out, and *kaleo*, called. Put together, these two words mean a called out congregation or an assembly of the called ones. Hence, according to the literal sense of the word, the church is the assembly of those called out of the world by God."

Expounding this further, LSM's *Lesson Book* says:⁵⁰

"The Greek word ekklesia indicates that the church is a congregation called out of the world so that God may carry out His purpose. According to Genesis 1:26, man was created by God to bear His image and...authority. However, man fell again and again. Eventually...man fell into the world, the system of Satan. In the eyes of God, as a result of the fall the entire human race has actually become the world. In John 3:16, human beings as a totality are called 'the world.' Since fallen man is in the world and has even become the world, how can God fulfill His purpose with man and through man? The only way is for God to call out a part of the human race. God has done this very thing. In applying His salvation to us, the first thing God does is to call us. Therefore, the first status of the church is that of the assembly of those who have been called out of the world by God to

Himself for the fulfillment of His purpose. Because the church as the assembly is separated from the world, we may say that the church is composed of the real *Hebrews*. *The root of the word Hebrew (Gen. 14:13) means 'to pass over'*; it especially means to pass over a river from one region to another and from one side to another. Hence, the word *Hebrew denotes a river crosser, one who crosses a river*. The church is composed of the believers who, as real Hebrews, have been called by God out of the world and have 'crossed the river' from one realm to another. Now as believers in Christ we are the called out ones, the assembly, the congregation called out by God, the *ekklesia* in opposition to the world, which is on the other side of the river we have crossed. Just as our forefather Abraham was called out of the land of Chaldea, so we have been called out of the world by God to be His assembly. Whenever we speak of the church as the assembly, the *ekklesia*, we need to realize that this means that *the church has been separated from the world*. The first status of the church indicates a thorough separation of God's called out ones from the world. There must be a great and thorough separation between the church as the *ekklesia* and the world as the system, the cosmos, of Satan. As the assembly, the church is separated entirely for God so that He may have a means to carry out His eternal purpose."

LSM's exposition relies heavily on the derivation of *ekklesia* from the 'root meaning' of 'called-out assembly.' Based on this link it emphasizes separation from the world. This point is further buttressed by the claim that the "root of the word Hebrew means 'to pass over'...Hence, the word Hebrew denotes a river-crosser, one who crosses a river." This latter notion is then linked with the church by the assertion, "The church is composed of the...real Hebrews, [who] have been called by God out of the world and have 'crossed the river'..." Hence LSM's commentary appeals to the etymological roots of the words 'ekklesia' and 'Hebrew.'

LSM's appeal to the root meaning of 'Hebrew' is easily dismissed. The issue is *not* whether the term, 'Hebrew' can be validly traced back to the root meaning of 'river-crosser;' that is irrelevant. More to the point, in later generations, 'Hebrew' was generally understood as an ethnic designation of a Semitic people-group and their language. The concept of 'river-crosser' dating back to Abraham's era, ~2,000 BC, became lost in the 'mists of time;' it was not an intrinsic element of the term 'Hebrew.' Moreover few Christians (besides Messianic *Jews for Jesus*) consider themselves to be "real Hebrews." This entire discussion is empty etymologizing.

Turning to LSM's oft-repeated assertion that *ekklesia* means 'called-out assembly,' this too is the fallacious result of etymologizing. *NT Greek Studies* explains that while it is true "that Christians have been called out of the world and into the Body of Christ or Family of God, *there is absolutely no indication that this was its emphasis or meaning in NT times*. It [*ekklesia*] simply means congregation or assembly and refers to a gathering of people, really any people, yet in the NT that group of people happens to be Christians. This faulty translation could in part be due to the reader misunderstanding the nature of the Greek language used in the NT."⁵¹ J. P. Louw, & Eugene A. Nida state that,⁵² "Though some...have tried to see in the term ἐκκλησία a more or less literal meaning of 'called-out ones,' this type of etymologizing is not warranted either by the meaning of ἐκκλησία in NT times or even by its earlier usage. The term ἐκκλησία was in common usage for several hundred years before the Christian era and was used to refer to an assembly of persons constituted by well-defined membership...For the NT...the meaning of ἐκκλησία is 'an assembly of God's people.'" Dr. Robert Cara explains further that,⁵³ "The Greek word *ekklesia*...is a combination of the words *to call* and *out*. However, scholarly Greek dictionaries do not give the definition of 'called-out ones' for *ekklesia* because it is *not being used that way* during the time of the New Testament. Although it is theologically true that Christians have been called out from the sinful world to be the church, that truth is not derived from the word *ekklesia*."

Despite countless repetitions, LSM's denotation of 'called out assembly' is not found in contemporary literature from the New Testament era. As Grant R. Osborne explains,⁵⁴ *ekklesia* "is often said to mean 'the called-out believers' while in reality nowhere in extant Greek literature does *ekklesia* have this connotation." In that era *ekklesia* was not defined in terms of the sphere out-of-which its members have been summoned. Rather, as Dr. David Alan Black states,⁵⁵ "In the New Testament...the noun *ekklesia* does not mean a called-out group, but an assembly of people defined by membership, in contrast to *ochlos*, which refers to a crowd." Professor Stanley E. Porter suggests the term,⁵⁶ "*ekklesia* was used because it was a word for 'gathering for a purpose,' an instance

of which might have been a Christian [purpose].” *Ekklesia* simply meant an assembly, defined by the common bond which its members shared—the belief that the resurrected Jesus was both Lord and Christ—not by what they were called out of. This distinction is important. Moreover, this conclusion is not a recent discovery. Over a century ago the respected biblical scholar F. J. A. Hort (1828–1892), pointed out in his classic work, *The Christian Ecclesia*, that this (supposed) exclusive meaning of *ekklesia*—a called-out subset from a larger group—did not have support. In his 1898 work, Cambridge Professor Hort stated,⁵⁷ “There is no foundation for the widely spread notion that *ekklesia* means a people or a number of individual men called out of the world or mankind...the compound verb *ekkaleo* is never so used, and *ekklesia* never occurs in a context which suggests this supposed sense to have been present in the writer's mind. In usage *ek-kaleo* meant only, ‘to call forth,’ and not, as this [supposed] interpretation would require, ‘to call out from a larger group.’ *Ekklesia*, in turn, meant only ‘that which is called forth, an assembly’.” As J. Y. Campbell comments in this context,⁵⁸ “as so often, *etymology proves to be here misleading rather than helpful.*” LSM’s repeated assertions about *ekklesia* have served to perpetuate an etymological error which ought to have been dispelled long ago.

Invalid Word-Dissections

The etymological fallacy derives in part from⁵⁹ “the assumption that a word always derives its meaning from ...components of which it is made. This says that a word’s meaning, regardless of its other parts, always can be determined by its root.” Or, as Robert Bradshaw puts it,⁶⁰ “The root fallacy is the mistaken belief that a word's meaning is the sum of its components. While this is sometimes true in the majority of cases it is not.” Word studies by Vincent, Vine and their peers often divide compound Greek words into their component parts, which are interpreted separately, then reassembled to yield a compound meaning. The definition of *ekklesia* as a called-out congregation illustrates this strategy. However contemporary scholars warn that “It would not be legitimate to build theology by dissecting Greek words.”⁶¹ Applying this axiom to *ekklesia* defined as a ‘called out assembly’ they state, “We cannot assume that the word is being used with that etymology in mind. It is simply the word for church.” A few English examples illustrate this fallacy. Defining the ‘grapefruit’ (*Citrus × paradisi*) as ‘grape’ plus ‘fruit’ is misleading; it not related to the grape (genus: *vitis*). It is a hybrid of the Jamaican sweet orange (*Citrus sinensis*), and the Indonesian pomelo (*C. maxima*). Similarly parsing ‘pineapple’ (*Ananas comosus*) into ‘pine’ plus ‘apple’ obscures, rather than enlightens; it is not an apple produced by a pine-tree! Returning to the Greek word, *ekklesia*, Prof. Craig Blomberg compares this term to the English word, ‘butterfly.’ He observes that,⁶² “There is no reason to imagine that people often thought of the etymology of the term [*ekklesia*] when they used it, any more than English-speakers regularly muse of the etymology of ‘butterfly’ (as a piece of butter flying by) when they speak of the insects so named...” Such examples are instructive, since in New Testament Greek, as in English,⁶³ “Word-constructions often take on their own meaning that is not the sum of the parts (e.g., ‘hot dog’ isn’t the sum of the meanings of ‘hot’ and ‘dog!’),” as Prof. Larry Hurtado points out. Hence scholars warn that,⁶⁴ “We should not interpret [compound Greek words] as if the use of a compound word assumes knowledge of or carries the meaning of the parts.” The Greek word,⁶⁵ “*Parakletos* (a compound of a preposition and verb) does not mean that we can understand the nature of the Spirit as ‘one called alongside’. With each of these words [*ekklesia*, *parakletos*, etc.] the meaning would be determined by how they are used in contemporary literature.” Let’s examine this last example.

Example #2: Invalid Word-Dissections--*Parakletos*—“One called to another's side to aid him”

NT scholars conclude that,⁶⁶ “*Parakletos* *does not mean* ‘one called alongside.’” Yet W. Lee repeatedly gives exactly this definition; he says regarding,⁶⁷ “the Greek word *parakletos*. This word is formed of two words: the preposition *para* (used here as a prefix) and the word *kletos*. Put together, these words denote someone called to our side...As the indwelling Spirit, [the Lord] is the ‘Paraclete with us’ (Jn. 14:16-17), the One alongside of us who is taking care of us.” Elsewhere he writes,⁶⁸ “In Greek, *parakletos* denotes someone alongside who takes care of our cause, our affairs. It is composed of two words: a preposition that means *with* and a form of the word for call. In ancient times a paraclete was a helper, advocate, counsel, or intercessor. A paraclete was someone who served a particular person by taking care of his needs. As one who is always present, a paraclete

may be considered a waiter, a helper...The Paraclete signifies one called to another's side to help him. Hence, the Paraclete is a Helper." Notice that W. Lee's etymologizing leads him to assert that "a paraclete may be considered a waiter," suggesting that the Holy Spirit responds to the believer's every whim, like the ideal waiter. Yet the New Testament never likens the Holy Spirit to a waiter, subordinate to the believer. W. Lee's dogmatic assertions on this topic contrast with other scholars' more sanguine observations that,⁶⁹ "The etymology of *parakletos* and its meaning [in John's writings] have proved to be a baffling problem," "John's usage [of *parakletos*] departs from the standard understanding of the Greek term," and "The linguistic background cannot help us," says Dr. Gary M. Burge, New Testament scholar at Wheaton College, IL.

LSM's exposition commits the exegetical fallacy of assuming that the Apostle John's use of a compound word, *parakletos* carried with it the meaning of its components—"one who is called to another's side to aid him." Plus it assumes both John and his readers were aware of this and intended this inference to be drawn. Witness Lee further adds the idea of a waiter, which reinforces this notion. Contrary to this view, NT Professor Grant R. Osborne observes that,⁷⁰ "At one time the term [*parakletos*] did have a meaning similar to its root, 'one called alongside to help' and was used in Hellenistic circles for a 'helper' or 'advocate.' However, this is inadequate in John 14 & 16 because that sense is never used in that context. Moreover, the semantic field does not build upon that root." Hence (contrary to W. Lee's exposition) scholars conclude there's no evidence in his gospel that John intended this inference to be drawn from his use of the term, *parakletos*.

Example #3: Reverse Etymological Fallacy—*Dunamis--Dynamo*

An associated exegetical error is the assumption that a New Testament word takes on a meaning that was not yet present in the author's era. An example of this (so-called) "reverse etymological fallacy"⁷¹ occurs when the Greek noun *dunamis* [power] and the verb *dunamai*, are expounded in terms of the later English derivative 'dynamite.' It is a semantic anachronism to interpret the first century Greek word, *dunamis* by an appealing to the 19th century English word, 'dynamite.' The scientist Alfred Nobel invented an explosive in 1867, naming it 'dynamite' based on the Greek word for power. It is invalid to retroactively appeal to dynamite with all its connotations to expound the NT word *dunamis*. Yet W. Lee commits this same type of etymological error by interpreting this Greek word in terms of the dynamo. He says,⁷² "First Tim. 1:12 says, 'I give thanks to Him who empowers me, Christ Jesus our Lord.' *The word empower in Greek comes from the root word for dynamo*. It is the same root word used in Phil. 4:13, which says, 'I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me.'" Michael Faraday (1831) & Dr. Werner Siemens (1867) developed the 'dynamo-electric machine' in the 19th century. Hence it is anachronistic to read 'dynamo,' with its connotations back into NT writings. "A modern metaphor can never be used to define" a New Testament Greek term, Prof. Osborne warns.⁷³

Example #4: Illegitimate Totality Transfer—*Proginosko--Foreknowledge*

The fallacy of illegitimate totality transfer occurs when it is assumed that,⁷⁴ "a word means everything it could mean in every place it occurs." More exactly,⁷⁵ "Many Greek words have a wide...semantic range. There may be numerous meanings for the same word; however context usually tells us which is correct. This fallacy is rooted in the idea that the meaning of a word in a specific context is much broader than the context itself allows..."

As an example of this error, consider W. Lee's exposition of God's foreknowledge.' He says,⁷⁶

"Rom. 8:29a refers to the believers as those whom God foreknew. In eternity God foreknew us according to His fore-knowledge (1 Pet. 1:2a). In the New Testament the root of the words 'foreknowledge' and 'foreknow' is 'know' [Greek: ginosko]. To this root a prefix is attached. The Greek prefix pro means before or beforehand. In New Testament Greek, words such as foreknow and foreknowledge imply more than what we would understand from the English translations. The Greek root for these words includes the meaning of appreciation, approval, and possession. If we approve something, we shall appreciate it. Then we shall want to take possession of it and own it. The foreknowledge of God spoken of in 1 Peter 1:2 implies that in eternity past God approved us and appreciated us. It also implies that in eternity past He took us over, possessed us, owned us. We may even say that as Joseph married Mary, God in His foreknowledge 'married' us in eternity

past... All this is included in the connotation of the word foreknowledge. God's fore-knowledge also includes His foreordination. In his expanded translation of the NT, Kenneth S. Wuest uses the word 'foreordination' in [1 Pet.] 1:2, saying that the believers are 'chosen-out ones, this choice having been determined by the foreordination of God the Father.' God's foreknowledge, therefore, means not only that He knew us in eternity past; it also means that He ordained us. We all were ordained by God the Father in eternity past."

The Greek word rendered foreknow is *proginosko*, which W. Lee dissects into the prefix, *pro* and 'know' [Gk. *ginosko*]. Most lexicons offer 'to know beforehand' as a translation. Witness Lee however loads this word with additional freight. According to him, "The Greek root...includes the meaning of appreciation, approval, and possession...It also implies that in eternity past [God] took us over, possessed us, owned us. We may even say that God in His foreknowledge 'married' us in eternity past...All this is included in the connotation of the word foreknowledge. God's foreknowledge also includes His foreordination." Thus Witness Lee piles meaning upon meaning, significance upon significance. All this based on a single word—*proginosko*! He even claims it includes foreordination, even though Rom. 8:29 mentions God's predestination, using the distinct Greek term, *prohorizo*. A little consideration should lead readers without any knowledge of NT Greek to balk at W. Lee's exaggerated claims. Why should foreknowledge imply that "God in His foreknowledge 'married' us in eternity past"? Perhaps Witness Lee makes this claim because the verb 'to know' is sometimes used of the marriage relationship—e.g. "Adam *knew* his wife, Eve and she conceived" (Gen. 4:1). Hence a euphemistic meaning of the word, 'know' is imported into the interpretation of 'foreknew' in Rom. 8:29. This is exactly what is meant by the fallacy of illegitimate totality transfer --the assumption that a word means everything it could possibly mean. In response to the tendency of expositors to load Greek words with excess meanings, Dr. Eugene A. Nida asserts⁷⁷ "Words do not carry with them all the meanings which they may have in other sets of co-occurrences." Therefore "The correct meaning of any term is that which contributes least to the total context." In the current context, applying that linguistic principle would mean that *proginosko* simply means 'to know beforehand.'

Example #5: *Oikonomia*—LSM's trademark "God's Economy"

'God's economy' is LSM's trademark. The word, 'economy' appears in titles to 15 LSM books. Regarding this W. Lee says,⁷⁸ "*Oikonomia* is God's household administration...it is God's administration...It is best to translate this word into 'economy,' the anglicized form of the Greek word *oikonomia*...Hence, in the English *Recovery Version* we use the word economy. Other English versions use dispensation instead of economy. For instance, the ASV uses dispensation in Eph. 1:10 & 3:9. Such a rendering does not clearly express the original meaning of the word..." W. Lee argues that 'economy' is the best translation for *oikonomia*. However, this translation incurs the 'reverse etymological fallacy;' it suggests modern connotations of 'economy' apply to its biblical use. This pitfall is evident when people ask "Does 'God's economy' mean God is interested in stocks, bonds, interest rates & unemployment rates, imports & exports, GDP & National Income?" The 21st century term, 'economy' has a very different meaning than *oikonomia* in the 1st century; hence it is not necessarily the best translation. Dr. Thanos Zartaloudis of the Univ. of London, makes this point, saying⁷⁹ "*Oikonomia* is distinguished from mere financial matters in the sense in which economy is understood in late modern times: household management is not concerned with matters like the mere acquisition of funds or the art of making money..."

What is God's economy? In his "high peak of the divine revelation," it is man becoming God; W. Lee says,⁸⁰ "God's economy is God becoming a man that man may become God in life and in nature (but not in the Godhead)..." More often he says,⁸¹ "God's economy...is His household administration *to dispense Himself* in Christ into His chosen people so that He may have a house, a household, to express Himself." Expressed succinctly,⁸² "In God's economy the main item is *to dispense God Himself* into His chosen people." 'Dispensing' is a crucial concept here; it is distinct from 'dispensation.' W. Lee asserts that,⁸³ "Dispensation and dispensing refer to two different things. Dispensing means giving, distributing, or imparting." Yet he concedes,⁸⁴ "The word economy is in the Bible, but *the word dispensing is not.*"

The term 'dispensing' is not in the Bible, so where did W. Lee get this notion? An obvious source is W. Lee's⁸⁵ early years among the 'Plymouth Brethren,' who taught dispensationalism. It is a short step from dispensations

to dispensing, a step suggested by etymology. As Prof. Jewel Spears Brooker explains⁸⁶ “Important aspects of dispensationalism emerge through attention to etymology. A *dispensatio* (from Latin *dispensare*, to weigh or to spend) is an administration, a management of resources. The analogous word in Greek, *oikonomia* (from *oikos*, house and *nomos*, management), in English, an ‘economy,’ is used by New Testament.” Hence the Latin term *dispensatio*, translating the Greek *oikonomia*, comes from the Latin verb, *dispensare* to dispense. From these diverse sources—NT Greek *oikonomia*, the Latin *dispensatio/dispensare*, the Brethren’s “dispensation” and today’s term, ‘economy’-- it appears that W. Lee has weaved together his notion of “God’s economy.”

Motivated perhaps by the absence of ‘dispensing’ in the Bible, W. Lee turns to etymology for assistance. He examines the etymology of *oikonomia*, saying,⁸⁷ “If you trace the root of this word, it goes back to a word that refers to the parceling out of food, the distributing of food as in parcels. This root word also means *to distribute food to the cattle* for grazing. It is God’s economy to parcel Himself out to us as our life and as our life supply.” Elsewhere he states,⁸⁸ “The Greek word [*oikonomia*] means *household law*, implying distribution (the base of this word is of the same origin as that for *pasture* in John 10:9, *implying a distribution of the pasture to the flock*).” It seems that here, in the etymology of *oikonomia*, W. Lee has found dispensing—in the distribution of fodder to cattle and pasture to the flock! However, for 50 years bible scholars have emphasized that,⁸⁹ “the etymology of a word is not a statement about its meaning but [merely] about its history.” Plus the fact that “the base of [*oikonomia*] is of the same origin as that for *pasture*,” does not imply these words’ meanings are related—that is another ‘root fallacy.’ Hence, it is invalid to deduce, based on etymology, that “God’s economy to parcel Himself out to us.” W. Lee attributes more meaning to *oikonomia* than it contains. Granted, *oikonomia* “denotes a household management (administration, or government) and, derivatively...a plan, or an economy.” But, the word *oikonomia* itself does *not* tell us what that plan or arrangement is. And it certainly does not imply that God’s economy is to “dispense Himself into man to make man God...”!

Dissection: *Oikonomia* (Economy) = *Oikos* (House) + *Nomos* (Law)

W. Lee proceeds to dissect *oikonomia* into its components. He asserts that to⁹⁰ “know the deep and complete significance of this Greek word...we need to realize [it] is composed of two words—*oikos*, meaning house or household, and *nomos*, meaning law. Economy, therefore, is a ‘house law,’ a household administration...This household has an economy, a household law. Here ‘law’ means regulations and these regulations refer to a household administration.” However, this dissection violates basic tenets of exegesis. Prof. Grant Osborne says, “It is erroneous to take a compound word, break it into its component parts and read the resultant meanings in that light.”⁹¹ But this is exactly what W. Lee does. The *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* warns,⁹² “It would not be legitimate to build theology by dissecting Greek words” and “We should not interpret [compound words] as if the use of a compound word...carries the meaning of the parts.” Yet, W. Lee parses *oikonomia* into ‘house’ (*oikos*) plus ‘law.’ ‘Law’ (*nomos*) often refers to the Ten Commandments. Hence this dissection describes God’s *Old Testament* economy, better than the new. In that era, Israel was God’s house/household (*oikos*) and Moses’ covenant prescribed the Law (*nomos*). W. Lee’s dissection of *oikonomia* would have played into the hands of the Apostle Paul’s Judaic opposition. They could argue, “Yes Paul, we agree with God’s *oikonomia*. Israel is God house (*oikos*) and *nomos* is the Law. So Gentile believers should keep the Law”! We ask: would the Apostle Paul have used the term, *oikonomia* if it carried these connotations? Surely not!

We know the New Covenant is a matter of grace, not of Law. Perhaps to avoid these associations W. Lee talks about ‘regulations,’ rather than ‘law.’ Dr. Will Adam is more forthright addressing this point; he says “The word economy (*oikonomia*) itself has a root *oikos* (house) and *nomos* (law). However, the use and application of the word *does not have legal overtones*.”⁹³ So, (in W. Lee’s view) ‘nomos’ here does not mean ‘law,’ even though that is its common meaning elsewhere. This exposition is “cherry-picking;” W. Lee picks up ‘oikos’ (house) and extrapolates to imply that⁹⁴ “God’s economy...is...to dispense Himself...so that He may have a house [*oikos*], a household...which household is the church...” The awkward point about ‘nomos’/Law is finessed.

Witness Lee’s Theological Lexicography

The problem is that words—*oikonomia*, *oikos*, etc.—are being over-loaded with more ‘theological freight’ than they can carry. This is an exercise in “theological lexicography,” a discredited approach, which, as Professor Stanley Porter explains,⁹⁵ “attempts to link theological concepts with individual words in the language with the unfortunate result that, often, particular words are said to have special theological meaning in and of themselves and in virtually all contexts.” In W. Lee’s case the theological concept is his notion of God’s economy and the ‘individual words’ are *oikonomia*, *oikos*, etc. But scholars⁹⁶ “have shown that there are persistent logical and linguistic flaws in trying to get meaning out of the history or supposed theological essence of a word and trying to transfer one theological meaning to all uses of the word.” Yet Witness Lee attempts to extract “the deep and complete significance of this Greek word”—*oikonomia*; he is “trying to get meaning out of the...supposed theological essence of a word [*oikonomia*] and trying to transfer that theological meaning to all [NT] uses of the word.” Yet this effort, Dr. Porter reminds us, is logically & linguistically flawed.

Example #6: LSM’s Etymologizing—Revelation’s 7 Churches

W. Lee’s etymologizing is manifest in his treatment of the seven local churches in Revelation. He asserts that,⁹⁷ “In Greek the names of the 7 cities are full of significance, each name exactly matching the spiritual condition of the church in that particular city. *Ephesus* in Greek means *desirable*. This signifies that the initial church at its end was still desirable to the Lord...” For each of the 7 churches W. Lee expounds the church’s condition in terms of the root meaning of the city’s name. The 7 etymological root meanings proposed by LSM are:

- *Ephesus* in Greek means *desirable*. This signifies the initial church...was still desirable to the Lord... (2:1)
- *Smyrna*: The Greek word means *myrrh*, [which] signifies suffering...Smyrna was a suffering church. (2:8)
- *Pergamos*: The Greek word means *marriage* (implying union) & *fortified tower*...The church in Pergamos ...entered into a marriage union with the world & became a high fortified tower (2:12)
- *Thyatira*: The Greek word means *sacrifice of perfume*, or *unceasing sacrifice*...The church in Thyatira prefigures the Roman Catholic Church, (2:18)
- *Sardis*: The Greek word means *the remains*, *the remainder*, or *the restoration*...The church in Sardis prefigures the Protestant church, from the...Reformation (3:1)
- *Philadelphia*: The Greek word means *brotherly love*...The church in Philadelphia prefigures the church life recovered by the brothers (3:7)
- *Laodicea*: The Greek word means *opinion*, *judgment*, *of the people* or *of the laymen*...The church in Laodicea prefigures the degraded recovered church. (3:14)

The validity of this exposition should be challenged. Were the author (the Apostle John) and his original readers aware of the etymology of their cities’ names? What evidence is there that John intended his readers to draw inferences from these root meanings? Why should the church’s condition be directly linked to the name of the city in which it is located? There are serious leaps in logic here. Professor Paul Trebilco notes with regard to the seven churches that,⁹⁸ “John does not see an automatic correlation between the city and the Christian community there.” However, W. Lee assumes an automatic correlation between the root meaning of the city’s name and the condition of the church located there. For example he assumes that because the church was located in Philadelphia it must of necessity be characterized by brotherly love. W. Lee writes,⁹⁹ “The word *Philadelphia* is composed of two Greek words, one based on *phileo*, which means ‘love,’ and the other on *adelphos*, which means ‘brother.’ Therefore, *Philadelphia* means ‘brotherly love.’ The church in Philadelphia was full of brotherly love and was therefore approved by the Lord.” Yet Christ doesn’t commend the church in Philadelphia for its brotherly love; he approved it for keeping His word and not denying His name (Rev. 3:8,10)

For each of the 7 churches we should ask—what is alleged link between the root meaning of the city’s name and the condition of the church located there? How do we know the readers were supposed to decode the hidden message in the etymology of the city’s name? How can we substantiate the alleged ‘encoded message’ to the church in Ephesus that it was “still desirable to the Lord”? Where is the proof that the Lord approved the

church in Philadelphia *because* it was “full of brotherly love” (rather than for other reasons)? Without evidence these claims are mere conjecture. On the other hand, if the ‘encoded message’ implicit in city’s name matches the Lord’s explicit message to the church, then that implicit, encoded, message is redundant.

Consider a contemporary example. It is widely held that Chicago is named after a wild onion and means ‘bad smell.’ On this basis are we justified in asserting that the Church in Chicago has a ‘bad odor’? More extensive investigation led researchers to conclude that Chicago bears the name of the native garlic, *chicagoua*.¹⁰⁰ This might seem more positive than ‘bad smell.’ However, W. Lee stigmatized Christianity as a ‘garlic room’ tainted with idolatry, division and tradition. He also asserts that garlic represents¹⁰¹ “worldly things, such as dancing and gambling.” Given these associations, based on the etymology of “Chicago,” can we attribute these traits to the LSM-affiliated church in that city? Is it valid to assert that, since “Chicago” is related to garlic, therefore LSM’s Church in Chicago is tainted with idolatry, division and tradition? Surely the answer is ‘No.’ Yet LSM’s publications feature this type of speculative exegesis. Consider deductions drawn from the name “Laodicea.”

Example #7: Laodicea--‘Devilish’ Degraded Democracy in the Church

In LSM’s publications the term “Laodicea” is pejorative, especially compared to “Philadelphia.” Consider W. Nee’s exposition; he says,¹⁰² “Laodicea is a distorted Philadelphia. When brotherly love is gone, Philadelphia immediately turns into the opinions of many. This is the meaning of the word *Laodicea*... *Lao* [sic] in Greek means ‘many people’ and *dikea* or *dicea* means ‘opinion.’ As soon as Philadelphia becomes degraded, the ‘brothers’ become the ‘many people,’ and its ‘brotherly love’ becomes ‘the opinions of the many.’ ...The opinion of the Lord is lost, and the only things left are the vote of the majority, ballots, and the show of hands. Once Philadelphia falls, it becomes Laodicea.” Notice that these deductions are based solely on the cities’ names, which are interpreted etymologically to refer to the churches. Watchman Nee infers that Laodicea’s problems are related to its democratic practices—“the vote of the majority, ballots, and the show of hands”—but there is nothing explicit in the biblical text itself (Rev. 3:7-22) to support this view.

W. Nee interprets the name “Laodicea” negatively. However, other expositors put a “positive spin” on its meaning. For example, Lynn Hiles, writes,¹⁰³ “The word Laodicea literally means ‘the justice of the people’ coming from the root in Thayer’s Greek Lexicon meaning to deal with a suit at law, a judicial hearing or sentence. It also infers a condemnation or execution of a sentence or punishment. *I believe that the primary thought to this church is that, in Christ, their judgment has already been met.*” So, according to this exposition, the church in Laodicea is justified, approved by God! This ‘creative interpretation’ would receive a knee-jerk rejection by LSM-adherents because it doesn’t match LSM’s “interpreted word.” Yet both this interpretation and LSM’s rely on illegitimate etymological reasoning; both ought to be rejected.

As expected W. Lee adopts W. Nee’s exposition. He asserts,¹⁰⁴ “democracy should not exist in the church life.” W. Lee makes this assertion based on similar reasoning; he alleges,¹⁰⁵ “The main meaning of the Greek name Laodicea is the opinion, the judgment, of the people. When a local church is full of peoples’ opinions, it surely will become neither cold nor hot.” Again, based solely on the etymology of the name, “Laodicea,” the church is said to be lukewarm due to peoples’ opinions. On this basis democratic practices in the church are denounced. W. Lee asserts,¹⁰⁶ “It is a shame to have democracy in the church...A local church that practices democracy is like the church in Laodicea (Rev. 3:14). ‘Laodicea’ in Greek means the opinion of the people. The church in Laodicea typifies the church in degradation. The ‘germs’ of democracy have come into some of the churches. This teaching of democracy in the church is a wind of teaching, a devilish blowing of the evil one.” Witness Lee reserves his harshest criticism for “democracy in the church;” it is denounced as a “wind of teaching, a devilish blowing of the evil one [Satan].” Yet what is the Biblical basis for this critique? Only the etymological root of “Laodicea.” Yes, the Lord critiques this church on many points, but democracy (peoples’ opinion) is not one of them! Neither is there any indication in the biblical text that the Apostle John expected his readers to draw this implication from his writing. These inferences are based upon invalid etymologizing. Skeptics would ask whether, in this case, an Asian cultural concept—antipathy to democracy—has not been clothed with a Scriptural garb so it can masquerade as “biblical truth.”

Example #8: The Nicolaitans

The deviant group called “Nicolaitans” appear only in Revelation (2:6, 15). This poses a problem for expositors since they are not identified elsewhere in the NT or extra-biblical literature. Most interpreters limit themselves to what can be directly inferred from the text of Scripture. Rev. 2:14-15 suggests the Nicolaitans attempted to seduce God’s people into idolatry and sexual immorality, perhaps disguising such license as freedom in Christ.¹⁰⁷ W. Nee and W. Lee however, make further assertions based upon the etymological dissection of the term. W. Nee alleges that,¹⁰⁸ “The word ‘Nicolaitans’ is composed of two words in the original language. The first word, ‘Nico,’ means to conquer and to subdue. The second word, ‘laitan,’ means the people or the common man. The two words are combined to form ‘Nicolaitans,’ which means those who conquer the people or those who subdue the common man. Hence, the Nicolaitans are none other than those who oppress, control, and subdue other brothers in the church because they are found in the church. The teaching of the Nicolaitans says that there should be hierarchy in the church and there should be a distinction between the rank of the clergy and the laity. As far as the meaning of the word goes, there is another significance which is very obvious: [Rev. 2:14-15] mentioned the teaching of Balaam and the teaching of the Nicolaitans together. Balaam is a Hebrew word, while Nicolaitans is a Greek word. We have seen that in Greek, the word ‘Nicolaitans’ has the sense of subduing the people, but in Hebrew, the word ‘Balaam’ also has a similar meaning. The word ‘Balaam’ means ‘those who devour the people’! As Balaam taught Balak to induce the Israelites to join themselves to the world, the Nicolaitans in the same way turned the church organization into a worldly community.”

Once again these assertions are based solely on the etymological roots of names ‘Nicolaitan’ and ‘Balaam.’ This is another instance of the root fallacy. The text of Scripture itself gives no indication that the underlying problem is hierarchy. Rather the text points towards idolatry and immorality. Prof. Paul Treblico examines this etymological hypothesis, but rejects it, since “It is not clear that readers of Revelation would have understood this etymological derivation.”¹⁰⁹ Dr. Treblico concurs with Prof. Richard “Bauckham [who] has another suggestion which better explains the name. He notes that the name ‘Nicolaitan’ shows they are followers of Nicolaus...‘the name Nicolaus is aptly explained by that of Balaam (Rev. 2:14)...who destroyed many Israelites ...by idolatry and fornication’.”¹¹⁰ We note that these scholars find the significance of the “Nicolaitans,” not in its etymology, but in its association with Balaam’s teaching mentioned explicitly in John’s writings.

Predictably Witness Lee adopts W. Nee’s notion of hierarchy, asserting that,¹¹¹ “The word ‘Nicolaitans’ is an equivalent of the Greek word *nikolaitai*, the root of which is *nikolaos*, composed of two Greek words—niko and laos. Niko means conquer or above others. Laos means common people, secular people, or laity. So *Nikolaos* means conquering the common people, climbing above the laity. Nicolaitans, then, must refer to a group who esteem themselves higher than the common believers. This was undoubtedly the hierarchy formed and established by Catholicism and Protestantism.” We note that Witness Lee’s dogmatic assertions—“must... undoubtedly”—are based solely on etymologizing.

This dubious exposition gives W. Lee grounds for denouncing other Christian Churches. He says,¹¹² “In both Roman Catholicism and the Protestant denominations, there is a hierarchical organization...The teaching of the Nicolaitans is that only the clergy are qualified and positioned to preach, to speak for the Lord. The others are so-called laymen. This is hierarchy.” Plus, he asserts that,¹¹³ “The teaching of Balaam and the teaching of the Nicolaitans are the teachings of today’s Protestant churches. These teachings build up the organized system of Christianity. If we are going to be an overcoming believer, we have to conquer the teaching of Balaam and the teaching of the Nicolaitans.” All these implications are based on,¹¹⁴ “the root fallacy [which] presupposes that every word[’s]...meaning is determined by etymology; that is by the roots of a word.” But “all this,” says Dr. D. A. Carson “is linguistic nonsense.” These deductions are fallacious on two counts: [1] As D. A. Carson states, “The meaning of a word cannot be reliably determined by etymology.”¹¹⁵ [2] As Dr. Moises Silva states, “We cannot presume that an author would necessarily be aware of a word’s etymology. And if he was, we cannot assume, without some evidence, that he intended his readers to grasp the connection.”¹¹⁶ In the present context no such evidence exists.

Invalid Implications for Church Governance

By combining their expositions of ‘Laodicea’ and ‘Nicolaitans,’ LSM draws strong implications about church governance. Hence W. Nee observes that,¹¹⁷ “In Revelation 2 and 3, the Lord specifically pointed out His rejection and hatred of both *Laodikeia* and *Nikolaos*. It is wrong to...resort to the principle of the majority...It is wrong for church affairs to be determined by one person or a few persons...This is the work of the Nicolaitans.” Based on this, W. Nee concluded that,¹¹⁸ “The way to conduct business in the church is not by dictatorship. Neither is it by...democracy. Decisions in the church are not arrived at through voting or the consensus of a few. Rather the responsible brothers make the decisions. But the responsible brothers must see ...there is the order of spiritual leadership. In the church there is no democracy and there is no dictatorship ...Among the 17 deacons, one must be the leader. Among the five elders, one must be responsible...” Note the phrase “no democracy...no dictatorship...[but] one must be the leader.” Such teachings provided a ‘Scriptural basis’ for Watchman Nee and Witness Lee (in their respective eras) to be revered as “the one responsible leader,” endowed with spiritual authority, through whom God exercised His theocracy in the “Lord’s Recovery.” From this perspective LSM’s etymological errors are far from innocuous; their influence continues today.

Example #9: Over-emphasizing Distinctions between Synonyms—*Oida* vs. *Ginosko*

LSM’s publications frequently draw distinctions between Greek terms rendered by the same English word. A prime example is the verb, ‘to know.’ W. Nee states,¹¹⁹ “There are two words in the Greek language that mean ‘to know’: *ginosko* and *oida*. The former is objective, whereas the latter is subjective.” W. Lee expounds this difference in the context of Heb. 8:11, “They shall by no means teach each one...his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know Me...” He says,¹²⁰ “In this verse two Greek words are used for *know*: the first is *ginosko*, which signifies the outward, objective knowledge; the second is *oida*, which refers to the inward, subjective consciousness. In John 8:55 the Lord Jesus told the Pharisees that they did not know (*ginosko*) God the Father (even in the outward, objective knowledge), and that He did know (*oida*) the Father (in the inward, subjective consciousness).” Evidently W. Nee derived this notion from¹²¹ John N. Darby and W. Lee followed him. W. Nee & W. Lee then proceed to apply this distinction to many NT passages--Matt. 26:70; Mark 4:13; Luke 12:39; 13:22-30; John 1:26, 31; 8:19, 55; 13:7; 21:17; Rom. 6:6, 9, 18; 1 Cor. 8:1-5, 7, 10; 12:2; 16:15; 2 Cor. 5:16; 1 Thess. 1:5; 1 Tim. 1:12; 3:14-15; 1 John 2:29 cited by W. Nee &/or W. Lee. This creates the impression there is a clear distinction between these two Greek words which applies across the entire New Testament.

Selective Presentation—Tampering with Biblical Evidence

LSM’s presentation gives the appearance that an invariant principle exists whereby *ginosko* always signifies outward, objective knowledge, whereas, *oida*, regularly refers to an inward, subjective consciousness. However this misleading impression is generated by a biased selection from all the NT occurrences of these verbs. No instance which violates this distinction is ever presented; all the cases discussed support this hypothesis. But is this presentation intellectually honest? Duval & Hays denounce such selective presentations, saying,¹²² “When we cite just the evidence that supports our favored interpretation...we commit the selective evidence fallacy. This error is particularly dangerous because here we are intentionally tampering with the biblical evidence.” Yet counter-examples to LSM’s *ginosko-oida* distinction abound. In Mark an unclean spirit tells Jesus, “I know [*oida*] who you are—the Holy One of God” (1:24). We ask, do unclean spirits really have an “inward, subjective consciousness” [*oida*] of Jesus? In John 17 while praying to the Father, Jesus declares “eternal life is to know [*ginosko*—an outward, objective knowledge of] the only true God...and Jesus Christ” (John 17:3, Rcv.). Yet, wouldn’t we expect an “inward, subjective, experiential knowledge” [*oida*] to be linked with eternal life?

In John chapter 9 Jesus heals a man blind from birth. In John’s narrative the verb “know” occurs eleven times. Strikingly, in every case the Greek verb is *oida*, never *ginosko*. However, applying W. Nee’s and W. Lee’s distinction between subjective and objective knowing, we would expect *ginosko* to be used in some cases. The blind man is asked, “Where is he [Jesus]?” He answers, “I do not know (*oida*).” (John 9:12). They are merely asking for objective information—what’s his location? This is not an inner, subjective knowledge! Likewise the Pharisees say: “We do not know (*oida*) where he [Jesus] is from. The man answered..., ‘Here is an amazing

thing, that you do not know (*oida*) where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes!’” (John 9:29-30) Again, knowing where Jesus is from is objective information; what’s his home town? We expect the verb, *ginosko* since this is not a matter of inner, subjective knowledge!

W. Nee appeals to the Greek OT for support, saying,¹²³ “The Old Testament also speaks of *oida* (1 Sam. 3:7). Samuel already objectively ginoskoed Jehovah, but he did not subjectively *oida* Him.” However, the Greek OT also uses the verb, “know” in other contexts—e.g. “Adam *knew* Eve, his wife, she conceived...” (Gen. 4:1). Here the verb is *ginosko*, but, in this case, Adam’s “knowing” of Eve, his wife, was surely subjective and experiential!

Regarding such distinctions Prof. Moises Silva warns,¹²⁴ “The greater the weight placed on distinctions among synonyms, the more likely it is that such distinctions are being overstated. For example, the Greek verbs *oida* and *ginosko* can both be translated ‘know’....This claim...does not fully take into account the many passages where such a distinction is not present.” Yet we note that W. Nee and W. Lee never point to an instance where these two verbs are used interchangeably, with no distinction in meaning. Hence they leave the impression there is always a meaningful distinction between the two Greek verbs. Thus they over-emphasize the difference between these synonyms. Dr. Douglas Moo observes,¹²⁵ “There has been a long history of over-emphasizing these kinds of distinctions. Some interpreters wrongly assume that two Greek words with similar meanings in English always have a different nuance. Especially, then, when the biblical writer shifts from one of these words to another it is automatically assumed that he intends a difference in meaning...But, as contemporary linguistic studies have shown, words with a similar meaning (i.e., synonyms) may have distinct nuances, but are sometimes used with exactly the same connotation.”

These scholars agree that the Greek verbs, *oida* and *ginosko* may have different nuances in *some* biblical contexts. However, the majority of commentators argue that the difference (when it exists) is the reverse of that claimed by W. Nee & W. Lee. Thus Prof. Moises Silva says,¹²⁶ “The most frequent suggested distinction between these verbs is that the latter [*ginosko*] can more easily be used in contexts that deal with the acquisition of knowledge. Accordingly, *oida* is often found where such acquisition is not in view...Some scholars proceed to argue that *ginosko* refers specifically to experiential knowledge, that is something acquired through experience as opposed to innate or intuitive knowledge.” Notice that these expositors argue that *ginosko* refers to experiential knowledge, whereas *oida* relates to “innate or intuitive knowledge.” An explicit example is Gregory C. Carlson who states that,¹²⁷ “Two words from the Greek NT are translated ‘know.’ One, *oida*, often means to ‘know with certainty.’ The other, *ginosko*, means to ‘know experientially.’” Moreover, Kenneth S. Wuest—one of W. Lee’s resources—commenting on 2 Tim. 1:12 “I *know* [*oida*] whom I have believed...” says,¹²⁸ “The word ‘know’ is not *ginosko*, ‘experiential knowledge,’ but *oida*, ‘absolute, beyond...a doubt knowledge’... The knowledge here [*oida*] is not personal knowledge gained by experience...” We note that W. Lee’s sources—Darby¹²⁹ & Wuest—contradict each other in terms of which verb represents subjective, experiential knowledge.

We conclude that W. Nee & W. Lee overemphasize the distinction between these Greek words and that the nature of the distinction (when it exists) is uncertain, given the contradictory conclusions of scholars (e.g. Darby vs. Wuest). We ask, in this situation, given W. Nee’s and W. Lee’s rudimentary knowledge of biblical languages, how much confidence can be placed in their pronouncements on this issue and similar issues?

Example #10: Word-Concept Fallacy--*Agapao* vs. *Phileo*

The Word-Concept fallacy arises from “confusing word with concept (failing to recognize that ideas are rarely expressed at the word level alone),”¹³⁰ says Professor David Alan Black. More specifically this discredited approach “attempts to link theological concepts with individual words in the [Greek] language with the unfortunate result that, often, particular words are said to have special theological meaning in and of themselves and in virtually all contexts,” says Professor Stanley E. Porter.¹³¹ This flaw was common in Gerhard Kittel’s *TDNT* and it was a major point of Prof. James Barr’s critique. Bible scholars now recognize that a complex relationship exists between theological concepts and biblical words. “We cannot assume a one-to-one correspondence between [theological] concepts and [Greek NT] words,”¹³² notes Dr. Ben Cooper.

Consider, for e.g., W. Lee's definition of *agape*, a Greek term rendered 'love.' Commenting on 2 Peter 1:7, he says, "The Greek word [*agape*] is used in the New Testament for the divine love, which God is in His nature (1 Jn. 4:8, 16). It is nobler than human love...It is stronger in ability and greater in capacity than human love."¹³³ W. Lee contrasts *agape* with *phileo*, another Greek term for love, defined as "to have affection for...a love of delight and pleasure." He says,¹³⁴ "The Greek word for love in [2 Pet. 1:7] is *agape*, the word used in the New Testament for the divine love, which God is in His nature (1 John 4:8, 16)...*Agape* is nobler than *phileo*. In quality and perhaps also in quantity *agape* is greater than *phileo*...*Agape*, [is] the deep and noble love with which God the Father loves all mankind, both believers and sinners." Two major points emerge: First, W. Lee posits a clear distinction between these two Greek terms for love—"agape," he asserts "is nobler than *phileo*. In quality and perhaps also in quantity *agape* is greater than *phileo*." Second, he identifies "*agape* [as] the word used in the New Testament for the divine love...with which God the Father loves all mankind." Hence a theological concept—God's love—is linked to a particular Greek word, *agape*. Whenever this word occurs in the New Testament text W. Lee asserts that God's love is involved. Hence, the believers' 'love feasts' (Greek: *agape*) in Jude 12 are described as, "Feasts of love *motivated by God's love (the higher love)*."¹³⁵

Once again LSM gives a biased presentation of the biblical evidence. Only those cases which 'fit' Witness Lee's hypothesis receive comment in his writings and footnotes. Counter-examples are never noted. Bock & Fanning regard this "selective evidence fallacy" as "perhaps the most serious error...wherein one only cites the evidence that favors the interpretation one wants to defend."¹³⁶ Yet, significant counter-examples exist: 2 Peter 2:15 tells us Balaam "loved (*agapao*) the wages of unrighteousness," 2 Tim. 4:10 says that Demas "loved (*agapao*) the present world." In these cases, how can this be the "higher, nobler love"? Plus *agapao* and *phileo* are both used to denote the Father's love for the Son-- John 5:20 says, "the Father loves (*phileo*) the Son..." The phrase, "the disciple Jesus loved" occurs four times in John's Gospel, three times the verb is *agapao*, once it is *phileo* (20:2)

What are we to make of this? Professor Darrell L. Bock points out that *agape* is used nine times in 1 Cor. 13. In this context, he says, it refers to the¹³⁷ "deep, genuine, selfless love, a love characteristic of God, a divine love. Yet this meaning is not intrinsic to the noun *agape* or its cognate verb, *agapao*. This is contrary to much popular exposition, which suggests that this word is used in the NT, because...only this word can capture something of the meaning of divine love. However, such an understanding will not stand up under scrutiny. In the Greek OT *agape/agapao* are used of Ammon's incestuous love for his sister, Tamar, a love that ultimately ends in rape. *Agapao* is used for Shechem's 'love' for Jacob's daughter, Dinah (Gen. 34:3). In the NT 2 Pet. 2:15 says Balaam 'loved (*agapao*) the wages of unrighteousness,' 2 Tim. 4:10 says Demas 'loved (*agapao*) the present world.' *Agapao* and *phileo* are used interchangeably to denote the Father's love for the Son (John 3:35 *agapao*, John 5:20 *phileo*)...It is not the word itself that conveys the sense of divine love but the context'¹³⁸."

Witness Lee's exegetical error lies in identifying God's own love with a particular Greek term, *agape*. He says, "The Greek word [*agape*] is used in the New Testament for the divine love..."¹³⁹ This is the Word-concept fallacy. However, as John H. Hayes points out,¹⁴⁰ "Generally individual words or phrases are not in themselves the bearers of special theological meaning...The NT word for love, *agape*, should not automatically be taken to mean some special form of self-giving concern [e.g. God's love]." Dr. D. A. Carson concurs, saying,¹⁴¹ "There is nothing in the words *agape* and *agapao* themselves to suggest that the love of which John speaks is invariably spontaneous, self-generated, without reference to the loved one [i.e., God's love]...This does not mean that for John there is no such thing as spontaneous, self-generated love, only that *it is not tied to a single word-group*." Again Prof. Carson concludes,¹⁴² "there is nothing intrinsic to the verb [*agapao*] or the noun [*agape*] to prove that its real meaning or hidden meaning refers to some special kind of love--[e.g. the divine love]."

Peter's Love for the Lord

The two Greek terms for love also occur in Jesus' interaction with Peter in John 21:15-17. In this context Witness Lee emphasizes the distinction between the two verbs. He points out that, when Jesus asks about Peter's love, "*agapao* is used in the Lord's question, and *phileo* is used in Peter's answer. This indicates," W. Lee asserts¹⁴³ "that Peter did not dare to say that he loved the Lord Jesus with a higher, nobler love." This

exposition assumes there is a meaningful distinction between the two terms, of which both the Lord and Peter were aware. Evidently, Peter could only affirm a lower, less-noble love for Christ.

However, given the considerable overlap in meaning between *agapao* and *phileo*, plus John's interchangeable use of these terms, modern expositors reject this distinction. Prof. Craig Blomberg, observes,¹⁴⁴ "Despite many popular sermons distinguishing between Jesus' word for love (*agapao*) and Peter's (*phileo*), this is probably mere stylistic variation. John also uses two different words for 'sheep' in this passage and two for 'tend,' without implying any significant distinctions. While in certain contexts biblical writers use *agapao* for a divine love and *phileo* for a brotherly love, in other places the distinction is not observed (e.g., 2 Sam. 13:4; Jn. 5:20; 2 Tim. 4:10; 1 Jn. 2:15). With nothing in this context [John 21] to demand the distinction, it is risky to assume it is present." Contemporary handbooks also reject LSM's hypothesis; BDAG's *Greek-English Lexicon*, comments concerning John 21 that,¹⁴⁵ "[*Agapao* and *phileo*] seem to be used interchangeably here; cf. the frequent interchange of synonyms elsewhere in the same chapter..." Louw and Nida's *Greek-English Lexicon*, says¹⁴⁶ "Though some persons have tried to assign certain significant differences of meaning between [*agapao* and *phileo*], it does not seem possible to insist upon a contrast of meaning in any and all contexts. For example, the usage in John 21:15-17 seems to reflect simply a rhetorical alternation designed to avoid undue repetition." Hence contemporary scholars reject W. Lee's interpretation of Jn. 21 as an unwarranted overemphasis on a distinction between synonyms. They view it as merely a stylistic variation characteristic of John's narrative.

Example #11: *Logos* vs. *Rhema* — 'Constant Word' vs. 'Instant Word'

A further example of LSM's overemphasis on the distinction between synonyms is provided by two Greek terms, both translated as 'word' in English—*logos* vs. *rhema*. W. Lee posits a clear and definite distinction between them. He says,¹⁴⁷ the "two classifications of the word in the New Testament are *logos* and *rhema*. The Greek word *logos* refers to the constant word (Col. 3:16). What is revealed and written in the Holy Scriptures is the constant word, the written word, the remaining word, the word that stands for eternity. The Greek word *rhema* refers to the instant word (Eph. 6:17)...By reading the Bible, we can receive the constant word of God. The constant word [*logos*], however, is not so powerful, living, working, energizing, or operating within us until it becomes the instant word [*rhema*]. When the constant word [*logos*] becomes the instant word [*rhema*], it becomes living, and it works or operates to accomplish God's purpose in us and with us." Hence W. Lee clearly distinguishes between the two types of 'word'—*logos* and *rhema*, the 'constant and instant word' (respectively).

Moreover, in W. Lee's view the two terms are related in a particular way; He says,¹⁴⁸ "The written word in the Bible is the *logos*. But when you read the *logos*, the Spirit will use a sentence, a phrase, or even a single word to inspire you, and that word will become the instant word...By this we see how the constant word becomes the instant word, how the *logos* becomes the *rhema*." Moreover he suggests *rhema* ranks above *logos*, since *logos* "is not so powerful, living, working, energizing, or operating within us" as *rhema*. No doubt most Christians have the experience described, whereby "the Spirit will use a sentence, a phrase, or even a single word [of Scripture] to inspire you." But note that Witness Lee is more definitive; he links this type of experience to specific Greek words, *logos* and *rhema*.

LSM's *Recovery Version* notes that *rhema*, the 'instant word,' occurs in Matt. 4:4; John 6:63, 68; 15:7; 17:8; Acts 5:20, 32; 10:37; Eph. 5:26; 6:17; Heb. 1:3; 6:5; 11:3; 1 Pet. 1:25. Once again LSM is guilty of selective evidence bias—only cases that appear to support this distinction are presented. Cases which don't fit are ignored. Thus the impression is given that this distinction is always meaningful; the two terms are never used interchangeably. Yet counter-examples exist. Compare Matthew's and Luke's accounts of Peter's denial:

- "Peter remembered the **word (*rhema*)** which Jesus had said, 'Before a rooster crows, you shall deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly." (Matt 26:75, Rcv)
- "...Peter remembered the **word (*logos*)** of the Lord, how he had said to him, 'Before a rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.' And he went outside and wept bitterly." (Luke 22:61, 62, Rcv)

The two accounts are virtually identical, yet Matthew uses the term, *rhema*, while Luke uses, *logos*. Surely in this case, no reputable expositor would suggest a significant difference in meaning is intended or implied! Consider also the function of God's Word as a sword. Eph. 6:17 links the Word to "sword of the Spirit." W. Lee comments,¹⁴⁹ "The Greek word for *word* in Eph. 6:17 is *rhema*, the instant word spoken at any moment by the Spirit in any situation. When the *logos*, the constant word in the Bible, becomes the *rhema*...This *rhema*, which becomes the Spirit, is the sword that cuts the enemy to pieces." This suggests God's *rhema*-word is the sword, not the *logos*-word. However, Heb. 4:12 says God's Word is *sharper than any two-edged sword*. LSM's note says,¹⁵⁰ "The Greek word denotes the *constant word* [*logos*] of God. Here it refers to the word...quoted from the Old Testament...That word is living, operative, and sharper than a two-edged sword." We conclude from this that *both* God's *rhema*-word and His *logos*-word function as a sword. *Rhema* is not superior to *logos*. Due to such cases Dr Gary Shogren labels as "Myth," the proposition "the two words for 'word' (*rhema*, *logos*) don't overlap."¹⁵¹ Conversely, he labels as "Fact," the statement "they often overlap and are used interchangeably."

1 Peter 1:23-25 contains both *logos* & *rhema*. It says, "Having been regenerated...through the living & abiding word [*logos*] of God. For 'all flesh is like grass...The grass has withered, & the flower fallen off, But the word [*rhema*] of the Lord abides forever.' [Quoting Isa. 40:8] And this is the word [*rhema*]...announced to you as the gospel." LSM notes that,¹⁵² "*Word* in v. 23 refers to the constant word [*logos*]; *word* here (used twice [in v. 25]) refers to the instant word [*rhema*]. When the constant word is spoken to us, it becomes the instant word." This comment suggests the *logos-rhema* distinction is significant here. However, Professor Thomas R. Schreiner observes that,¹⁵³ "The word of God is identified as *logos* in [1 Pet. 1] v. 23 and *rhema* in [1 Pet. 1] v. 25. The latter is likely used in v. 25 because it occurs in the citation from Isaiah 40:8. *Therefore we should not try to establish a different meaning for the two terms. They are synonyms*, both referring to the gospel." Dr. Schreiner's suggestion is appealing; Peter used *rhema* because that is the term used in the Greek OT in Isaiah 40:8, which Peter quotes (in v. 25a). *Logos* and *rhema* are used interchangeably here.

A more thorough analysis of the relation between *rhema* and *logos* is offered by David L. Allen. He observes,¹⁵⁴ "*Rhema* has three semantic categories: word, statement, and event. The first two are sub-categories under the general semantic umbrella of communication. When *rhema* is used in the first sense, it connotes a minimal unit of discourse, sometimes a single word. When it is used in the sense of 'statement,' it connotes something stated or said with primary focus on the content of the communication. *In this sense it is indistinguishable from logos in meaning and employment of either noun would be a matter of stylistic preference*. The third sense of 'event' indicates a matter, thing or happening to which we may refer. Of these three semantic categories, it would appear that *logos* is not used in the first sense of a minimal unity of discourse or a single word, but *is a synonym of rhema in the other two uses*." Dr. Allen concludes that in two of the three cases—"statement and event"—*rhema* & *logos* are synonyms and indistinguishable. As with other synonym pairs—*agapao/phileo* and *oida/ginosko*—Witness Lee exaggerates the difference between these two terms.

Example #12: Unwarranted Associative Fallacy—'Holy, holy, holy' because God is Triune

Our last example is the "unwarranted associative fallacy." This error "occurs when a word or phrase triggers off an associated idea, concept, or experience that bears no close relation to the text at hand, yet is used to interpret the text."¹⁵⁵ William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament at The Master's Seminary, illustrates this pitfall, saying,¹⁵⁶ "What the Bible student must do is to focus on what the Scriptures say, not on what he thinks the Scriptures imply. One example of this fallacy is the trinitarian interpretation of the four living creatures' crying out 'Holy, holy, holy' in Rev 4:8.21." These scholars conclude that it is fallacious to assert that the threefold praise--'Holy, holy, holy'--proves that God exists in Trinity, that God's three "Persons" are implied by the threefold repetition of the term, 'holy.' Yet Witness Lee makes exactly this assertion.

W. Lee states emphatically,¹⁵⁷ "in Isaiah 6:3...the seraphim in the heavens give threefold praise to God, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy.' *The reason* they praise God by repeating the word 'holy' three times *is, without any doubt, because the God whom they praise is one-in-three*." Plus he asserts,¹⁵⁸ "Rev. 4:8 says, 'The four living creatures

...have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God the Almighty...' The mentioning of 'holy' three times, as in Isaiah 6:3, *implies the thought of God being triune...the Triune God is holy and is triply holy...*"

Witness Lee extrapolates this exposition one step further by relating the Trinity's three 'Persons' to the OT priests' threefold blessing upon Israel and the NT believers' threefold request in the 'Lord's prayer.' He says,¹⁵⁹ "According to the record in Num. 6:24-26, God told the priests to bless the children of Israel with 3 requests. The first request would be carried out by God the Father, the second request by God the Son, and the third request by God the Spirit. In Isaiah 6:3, when praising God, the seraphim also say consecutively, "Holy, holy, holy." In the New Testament in Matt. 6:9-10 there are also 3 requests in the Lord's prayer. The first request is carried out by God the Father, the second request by God the Son, and the third request by God the Spirit. Furthermore, in Rev. 4:8, when praising God the four living creatures also say consecutively, 'Holy, holy, holy.' Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, prayer on the earth always consists of 3 requests, and praise in the heavens always consists of 3 *holys*. Thus, by inference, *we can conclude that God is truly triune.*" All these triplets, W. Lee asserts, are "*because the God to whom we petition, pray, and praise is triune.*"¹⁶⁰ But, all this is unwarranted extrapolation; there is nothing in Num. 6 or Matt. 6 that implies "The first request would be carried out by God the Father, the 2nd request by God the Son, and the 3rd request by God the Spirit." In the 'Lord's Prayer,' all three requests are explicitly addressed to God the Father, "Our Father..."

Triplets in Scripture do not automatically imply the Trinity! Prof. William D. Barrick explains their significance and points out biblical counter-examples. He says,¹⁶¹ "One example of this fallacy is the trinitarian interpretation of the four living creatures' crying out 'Holy, holy, holy' in Rev 4:8.21. The multiple adjectival declaration ['Holy, holy, holy'] is actually an emphatic Semitic triplet. Other such triplets include 'a ruin, a ruin, a ruin' (Ezek. 21:27) or 'land, land, land' (Jer. 22:29). What kind of threefold existence might the creative interpreter dream up for these occurrences? This fallacy falls into the category of logical fallacies..." The fact of the Triune God is testified adequately in Scripture (e.g. Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). Efforts to buttress the doctrine of the Trinity by finding "additional proofs" in Scripture's threefold declarations are unwarranted.

Conclusions

By conventional standards Witness Lee was an 'amateur'¹⁶² in biblical languages—OT Hebrew and NT Greek. He had only a rudimentary, self-taught knowledge of New Testament Greek. He knew no Hebrew. He relied on outdated word studies, lexicons and dictionaries (e.g. Alford, Darby, Vincent, Vine & Kittel). These traits plus a dismissive attitude towards scholarship & boundless self-confidence made W. Lee liable to etymological errors and exegetical fallacies. Meanwhile he was blissfully ignorant of the revolution in biblical linguistics which began with Prof. James Barr's *Semantics of Biblical Language* (1961) and was continued by other notable scholars. This revolution exposed the numerous errors and fallacies inherent in the earlier word studies on which W. Lee relied. For example, the etymological fallacy assumes the original linguistic root denotes the word's "true meaning" which is embodied in all subsequent cognates of a word. Yet we know from English that etymology is often misleading. For example, the word 'robot' derives from the Czech word 'robota,' meaning 'forced labor' or 'slavery.' Yet today it has no connotation of human serfdom. The same principle holds for Greek words. As Gene L. Green says,¹⁶³ "Word meaning cannot be determined by etymology or examination of the root of any particular word...Barr's cautions have become axiomatic, and no commentator worth their salt would dare engage such practices in the exegesis and exposition of the biblical text." Evidently Dr. Green is unaware of LSM's local churches where biblical exposition remains trapped in the "dark ages" of etymological error, and where the obsolete word-studies & dictionaries of Alford, Darby, Vincent, Vine and Kittel are still quoted as final authorities in LSM *Recovery Version* footnotes & *Life-study* publications.

Invalid dissections of Greek words also occurred because "The root fallacy [led to] the mistaken belief that a word's meaning is the sum of its components."¹⁶⁴ However, in both English and Greek, dissecting a compound word into its components is often misleading. The word 'ladybug,' could be parsed into 'lady' plus 'bug,' suggesting they are always female insects—a false deduction. The error is obvious to native English-speakers. However, unfamiliarity with NT Greek leaves the reader vulnerable to such pitfalls in that language. In this

case (as in others) a little knowledge of Greek is dangerous. Witness Lee's rudimentary knowledge of Greek and obsolete linguistic resources, plus the fact that his 'helpers' with greater language facility served as 'cheerleaders' instead of correctives, left him highly vulnerable to such exegetical fallacies and etymological errors.

W. Lee failed to detect etymological errors in *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop (1807–65). This book¹⁶⁵ asserts that key Roman Catholic icons originated 4,000 years ago in primeval Babel with Nimrod. Witness Lee cited Hislop's *Two Babylons* repeatedly in his scathing critique of Catholicism. This work is "Hislop's Fables;" it takes myth as historical fact and weaves a web of etymological error. Professor F. F. Bruce illustrates Hislop's "etymological inventiveness;" "for him 'cannibal'...was Aramaic *kahnā Ba'al*, 'priest of Baal'." Hence, Nimrod's priests were cannibals! This is naïve phonetics—'cannibal' sounds like the Aramaic *kahnā Ba'al*. He claims "Easter" derives from "Ishtar," an Assyrian goddess, since they sound similar. Dr. Bruce notes, "This kind of argument...has been invalid for something like three-quarters of a century...Philology no longer depends on fortuitous similarities. The laws of...language have been...recorded, and etymologies must conform to these." W. Lee failed to detect such etymological errors. Worse still he promoted Hislop's outdated & discredited views.

Examining LSM's publications we have illustrated cases of the etymological root fallacy, invalid word-dissections, the reverse etymological fallacy, illegitimate totality transfer, the selective evidence fallacy, the word-concept fallacy and the unwarranted associative fallacy. Illustrative examples include key Greek words—*ekklesia*, *parakletos*, *oikonomia*, *dunamis*, *proginosko*, *Laodicea*, *Nicolaitans*, *oida/ginosko*, *logos/rhema* & *agapao/phileo*. These cases are merely the 'tip of the iceberg;' we could add many more examples. W. Lee's exposition of Revelation's 7 churches is rife with etymologizing. The etymological root meaning of each city's name is used to characterize the church in that city—a tenuous expositional procedure. Moreover this case demonstrates that such errors are far from innocuous. LSM's diatribe against democracy in the church is based largely on the etymology of the names "Laodicea & Nicolaitans." Based on this W. Lee asserts,¹⁶⁶ "democracy in the church is a wind of teaching, a devilish blowing of the evil one." Yet there is nothing in the biblical text to suggest that the Apostle John intended his readers to draw these inferences. These exegetical fallacies and etymological errors undermine the value of LSM's *NT Recovery Version* and *Life-study* commentaries.

Readers are advised to treat every comment by LSM regarding Greek words with a high degree of skepticism.

Lastly, some might ask—"what about the non-LSM local churches in the Great Lakes Area?" Are these GLA churches in the same situation as LSM's "local churches"? The short answer is: Yes, (sadly) the situation is the same. In this aspect, "the apple has not fallen far from the tree." The same kinds of etymological errors are committed and similar exegetical fallacies are perpetuated in ministry to regional gatherings of GLA churches. Too often the standard set of outdated word studies & dictionaries--Alford, Darby, Vincent, Vine, Kittel, etc.--are treated as a "buffet" from which the desired definition is selected which "fits our vision" or is "consistent with our historical commitment." However, this practice involves a further fallacy—"Appealing to an unknown or unlikely meaning of a word, due to the interpreter's theological presuppositions..."¹⁶⁷ A full analysis of non-LSM, Great Lakes' churches' situation requires another article, which may be forthcoming in due course.

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Notes: "*LSM's Etymological Errors & Exegetical Fallacies*" would be a more descriptive title; "*LSM's Etymological Errors*" should be taken as a short form. Thanks to those commenting on earlier drafts. The author alone is responsible for the contents of this piece. The views expressed here are solely the author's and should *not* be attributed to any believers, elders, co-workers or churches with whom/which he is associated. In view of the topic, the author wishes to emphasize that he claims no more than a rudimentary personal knowledge of NT Greek. He has sought therefore to rely on primary & secondary sources and to quote the findings & views of qualified scholars. Lastly he admits committing his share of etymological errors & exegetical fallacies in the past and hopes to do better in the future.

0. W. Lee, *Proper Aggressiveness of the Lord's Serving Ones*, Chap 7, Sect. 2. We quote these statements with no intention to disparage W. Lee or W. Nee. Our purpose is merely to provide the appropriate context for evaluating W. Lee's statements about biblical languages. Concerning Watchman Nee, W. Lee says in his biography, "Watchman Nee did not attend a theological school or Bible Institute. Most of what he learned...was acquired through studying the Bible and reading the books of spiritual men." [W. Lee, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation...*, p. 23]
1. W. Lee, *Proper Aggressiveness of the Lord's Serving Ones*, Chap. 8, Sect. 1
2. W. Lee, *Vision, Living & Work of the Lord's Serving Ones*, Chap. 14, Sect. 2
3. W. Lee, *Elders' Training, Book 4: Other Crucial Matters Concerning...the Lord's Recovery*, Chap. 11, Sect. 2. "The sentence reads: "We did not study Greek, yet we had dictionaries, lexicons, & concordances to help us in our study."
4. W. Lee, *Vision, Living & Work of the Lord's Serving Ones*, Chap. 14, Sect. 2, emphasis added. The quote, in context, reads: "Although I am not a Greek scholar, my explanation of the New Testament Greek is based on the study of past Greek scholars. The Greek commentaries of the New Testament that I regularly use are the best and the most authoritative. When I look up a word, I get into all the reference books. Many footnotes in the Recovery Version of the New Testament are the extracts of the best reference books." [W. Lee, *Vision, Living & Work of the Lord's Serving Ones*, Chap. 14, Sect. 2] Note the phrase: "the best reference books."
5. LSM's *Recovery Version of the NT* footnotes contain 13 references to John N. Darby (1800-1888), 15 references to Henry Alford (1810 – 1871), 18 references to Marvin Vincent (1834--1922); 3 references to Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687 – 1752), 1 citation of Kenneth Wuest (1893 – 1962), zero references to W. E. Vine, D. M. Panton, R. Govett & G. Kittel. LSM's English publications have over 600 references to John N. Darby (1800-1888), approx. 125 citations of David Morrisson Panton (1870 – 1955), over 100 references to Henry Alford (1810 – 1871), over 100 citations of George Hawkins Pember (1837--1910), approx. 80 references to Marvin Vincent (1834--1922), over 70 citations of Robert Govett, (1813 – 1901), 23 citations of Kenneth Wuest (1893 – 1962), 10 references to Gerhard Kittel (1888 – 1948), 10 references to Fredrick Lewis Godet (1812—1900), 5 references to W. E. (William Edwy) Vine (1873 - 1949) [W. E. Vine's *Expository Dictionary of NT Words* was first published ~1940] There are 2 references to Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687 – 1752) in LSM's publications. We note that LSM's publications also have 19 references to *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop (1807–65), first issued as a pamphlet in 1853, expanded in 1858, and finally published as a book in 1919. [This is a discredited work, which ought to be entitled "*Hislop's Fables*," nevertheless LSM continues to cite it as an authoritative source.] The life-spans of these author give an indication of the publication dates of their works—weighted by frequency, the mean date would fall in the 19th-century! Only Wuest's works & Panton's writings were first published in the post-World War 2 era! W. Lee's use of these sources is illustrated by the following quotes: "We have to learn to use the appropriate reference books and concordances. For example, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* has numbered and identified more than 5,600 Greek words which are used in the New Testament. At present, almost all the Bible expositors and those who pursue the truth use this book. The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* written by Gerhard Kittel and the New Testament word study of Henry Alford both contain deep analysis on the meaning and usage of every significant word in the New Testament. We have to know how to use these reference books." [W. Lee, *Truth, Life, the Church, & the Gospel—The Four Great Pillars in the Lord's Recovery*, Chap. 8, Sect. 4] "We need to study every word of every verse. For this, we need the Greek text. Even if we do not know Greek, we can use reference books, such as *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, *Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament*, an interlinear Greek and English New Testament, and a Greek dictionary. We can also compare different versions, such as the American Standard Version, Darby's New Translation, the Amplified Bible, and Wuest's Expanded Translation. These references will render much help to us." [W. Lee, *Crucial Elements of God's Economy*, Chap. 1, Sect. 4] "To study a book of the Bible word by word and according to different topics, we need the help of reference books such as Greek and Hebrew lexicons and concordances. The best two concordances are *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* and *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible*. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* is a great help to us. Wuest's Expanded Translation, the Amplified Bible, and Vincent's *Word Studies in the New Testament* also are helpful." [W. Lee, *Crucial Principles for the Christian Life & the Church Life*, Chap. 8, Sect. 5] "The Greek word for truth is *aletheia*. In studying this word, I consulted a number of lexicons & concordances. I was especially helped by the article on truth in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the NT*." [W. Lee, *Life-Study of 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude*, Chap. 9, Sect. 2]
6. There are 10 references to Gerhard Kittel (1888 – 1948) in LSM publications (English), notably to his *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT). Gerhard Kittel edited the first 3 volumes in German of *NWNT* 1933-38. The English versions appeared 30 years later; the English translation of Vol. 1 was pub. 1963/64. The 10 volume English translation of *TDNT* was finished in 1976. In the interests of full disclosure it should be noted that G. Kittel was an ardent

supporter of the German Nazi party. William F. Albright wrote that, "In view of the terrible viciousness of his attacks on Judaism and the Jews, which continued at least until 1943, Gerhard Kittel must bear the guilt of having contributed more, perhaps, than any other Christian theologian to the mass murder of Jews by Nazis." Witness Lee emphasizes his use of Kittel's works. For e.g. he says, "In my home there are close to 100 sets of books by different writers who are authorities on the Bible. For instance, there is a German writer named Gerhard Kittel whose work, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, specializes in New Testament word studies. He expounded, word for word, the Greek words used in the New Testament. There are ten volumes in this set. One Greek word can have eight to ten pages of explanation, expounding in detail the classic usage of the Greek word, how it was used during the time of the Lord Jesus on the earth, its fundamental usage in the Bible, and its common usage by the Greeks." [W. Lee, *Proper Aggressiveness of the Lord's Serving Ones*, Chap 7, Sect. 2] W. Lee commends Kittel's *TDNT* highly saying, "There is a very good Greek dictionary—*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*—which explains every word in the New Testament. It was written in German by a German brother whose last name was Kittel. The entire New Testament uses more than 7,600 Greek words, and Kittel's research puts them into 10 big volumes, clearly indicating the usage of every Greek word. He explains the changes in their meanings from their most ancient uses to their classical usages. He also gives clear explanations of how the words were used when the Greek language pervaded the Mediterranean region. Not only so, in these volumes he also discusses the meanings of each word as used in the New Testament writings, as well as their meanings in ordinary usage outside of the biblical writings. From this book we see that Greek words have different usages according to 5 periods of time. Kittel points out all these usages for us. Because of this book we can get to the depths and carefully study every book of the New Testament." [W. Lee, *Speaking for God*, Chap. 6, Sect. 5]

7. Witness Lee tells of receiving books from Watchman Nee, "He had given me Dean Alford's 4-volume work entitled *The New Testament for English Readers*. Dean Alford was an authority on the Greek words of the New Testament. This 4-volume set rendered me great help in knowing the Bible. The other books given to me by Brother Nee were John Nelson Darby's 5-volume *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*. His synopsis of the Scriptures can be considered as the best among all the expositions." [W. Lee, *History of the Church & the Local Churches*, Chap 4, Sect 3]
8. W. Lee, *Guidelines for the Propagation of the Lord's Recovery*, Chap. 1, Sect. 2. Elsewhere W. Lee makes a similar comment, stating: "Very few spiritual publications of weight have been put out over the past 39 years. Many publications have been put out, but not one of them has spiritual weight and value. For the more than 20 years that I have been living in America, I have been observing the books put out in Christianity; some of the brothers have been helping me. It is difficult to find a book or a message that contains the light of truth or the supply of life. However, *a group of scholars have done an excellent work over the past 10 years and put out several lexicons for the Greek New Testament. These books have helped us tremendously...All the Greek lexicons published in the past cannot compare to the quality of the Greek lexicons that were published during the past 10 years in America.*" [W. Lee, *Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 3: The Future of the Lord's Recovery & the Building Up of the Organic Service*, Chap. 7, Sect. 3] Note W. Lee's observations regarding Greek resources—That "*scholars have done an excellent work over the past 10 years and put out several lexicons for the Greek New Testament.*" However these statements are paradoxical, since W. Lee makes no explicit reference to contemporary Greek NT resources—lexicons, etc. All the Greek resources referenced by W. Lee date back decades in the past. Where is the evidence that W. Lee used the "*Greek lexicons that were published during the past 10 years in America*"? This author hasn't found any such evidence. We also note W. Lee's disparaging attitude towards theological education: "Today's seminaries train their people to study all the old publications. They study church history, the historical study of theology, and the writings of the church fathers. They have degrees in theology, Hebrew, Greek, church history, and other items. *The seminaries give people doctor's degrees, but these degrees are in the old things. What they are actually doing is holding the Lord back.* Today's theological teachings hold the Lord back from going on in His recovery. I am not saying that all the books in the past are not good. Some of them may be good, but they are old. Some of you who graduated from a seminary can testify that you did not receive anything advanced or improved there. All you received were the old things." [W. Lee, *Elders' Training, Book 4: Other Crucial Matters Concerning the Practice of the Lord's Recovery*, Chap. 1, Sect. 3, emphasis added] The following quotes are along the same lines: "For the *past thirty or more years there has been no real progress in Christianity...Even though Christianity has not published any spiritual books of weight for the past 39 years, the Lord has released many riches among us. We received many riches when Brother Nee was alive, but the light we received in the Life-study messages has become even brighter.*" [W. Lee, *Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 3: Future of the Lord's Recovery & the Building Up of the Organic Service*, Chap. 7, Sect. 4, emphasis added] "*Since World War II, for 39 years, there has not been one publication that is weighty concerning Bible exposition, the divine life, or the truth.* However, in the Lord's recovery, the 27 books of the New

- Testament have been clearly expounded and published in about 1,200 hundred Life-study messages with 12,000 pages.” [W. Lee, *Guidelines for the Propagation of the Lord's Recovery*, Chap. 1, Sect. 3, emphasis added]
9. W. Lee, *Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 3: Future of the Lord's Recovery & the Building Up of the Organic Service*, Chap. 7, Sect. 3
 10. W. Lee, *Proper Aggressiveness of the Lord's Serving Ones*, Chap 7, Sect. 2. By conventional standards, W. Lee was an ‘amateur’ in terms of biblical languages. He writes “A person who studies the truth but *does not know Greek can be considered an amateur*...I never took a Greek class; neither was I taught...I am not a Greek scholar.” [W. Lee, *Vision, Living & Work of the Lord's Serving Ones*, Chap. 14, Sect. 2, emphasis added]
 11. The quote, in context, reads: Barr’s *Semantics of Biblical Language* “shook the foundations of the many attempts to do theology in the form of word studies, most notably the [G. Kittel’s] *TDNT*.” [Max Turner, “*Modern Linguistics & the NT*” in Joel B. Green (ed.) *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, p. 153] Dr. Max Turner was (until 2011) Professor of NT at London School of Theology, London, UK.
 12. W. Lee, *Truth, Life, the Church, & the Gospel—The 4 Great Pillars in the Lord's Recovery*, Chap. 8, Sect. 4. W. Lee recommends Kittel’s work along with Alford’s saying: “The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* written by Gerhard Kittel and the New Testament word study of Henry Alford both contain deep analysis on the meaning and usage of every significant word in the New Testament.” [W. Lee, *Truth, Life, the Church, & the Gospel—The 4 Great Pillars in the Lord's Recovery*, Chap. 8, Sect. 4]
 13. Kenneth A. Cherney Jr., *General Linguistics & Some Exegetical Fallacies*, p. 179
 14. Stanley E. Porter “*The Basic Tools of Exegesis*,” in S. E. Porter (ed.) *Handbook to the Exegesis of the NT*, p. 33
 15. W. Lee, *Proper Aggressiveness of the Lord's Serving Ones*, Chap. 8, Sect. 1. The quote in context reads: “I regularly consult Greek dictionaries and Bible concordances. One of these works, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, is a ten-volume set by a German brother, Gerhard Kittel. This dictionary lists and explains every Greek word according to its usage in the ancient times, in the New Testament times, and in modern times. I consult this set of books the most. As a result I can cut straight the word of the truth according to the Greek language when I expound the New Testament.” [W. Lee, *Proper Aggressiveness of the Lord's Serving Ones*, Chap. 8, Sect. 1]
 16. Prof. James L. Boyer writes, “The dictionary says Etymology is ‘that branch of philology which treats of the derivation of words.’ It usually is thought of as the ascertaining of the original meaning, or the meaning of the primitive basic root from which a word is derived, in the parental language. Basically it is an historical pursuit; practically it is a very complex, technical scientific investigation of comparative philology, one which is safe only in the hands of experts.” [James L. Boyer, *SEMANTICS IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION*, *Grace Journal* 3.2 (1962) p. 25]
 17. Acts 26:22, note #1 RcV.
 18. Anthony C. Thiselton, *SEMANTICS & NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION*, pp. 80-81
 19. Anthony C. Thiselton, *SEMANTICS & NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION*, p. 76. The quote, in context, reads: “Semantic study at this period, however, was seriously hampered by a number of *mistaken assumptions*, some of which still find their way into the outlook of some interpreters of the New Testament even today. These *false assumptions* include the following: (1) that the word, rather than the sentence or speech-act. constitutes the basic unit of meaning to be investigated; 6 (2) *that questions about etymology somehow relate to the real or ‘basic’ meaning of a word*; (3)....” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *SEMANTICS & NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION*, p. 76, emphasis added]
 20. W. Lee, *Vessels Useful to the Lord*, Chap. 3, Sect. 1, emphasis added.
 21. Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *The Nature of Religious Language: A Colloquium*, p. 39
 22. Grant R. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, (1991) p. 64. Grant R. Osborne is Professor of NT at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.
 23. Grant R. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, (1991) p. 69
 24. Grant R. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, (1991) p. 67
 25. Grant R. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, (1991) p. 65, emphasis added
 26. Robert Cara, *Word-Study Fallacies*, Dr. Robert J. Cara is Professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, NC.
 27. Anthony C. Thiselton, *SEMANTICS & NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION*, pp. 80-81
 28. Grant R. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, (1991) pp. 67-8
 29. Stanley E. Porter, & Andrew Pitts (eds.), *The Language of the NT: Context, History, & Development*, p. 1. The quote in context, reads: Kittel’s *TDNT* “frequently indulged in...the root fallacy and what Barr labeled ‘illegitimate totality transfer,’ involving the tendency of many contributors to Kittel’s dictionary to transfer the entire lexical meaning of a term into a

- single usage.” [Stanley E. Porter, & Andrew Pitts (eds.), *The Language of the NT: Context, History, & Development*, p. 1]
 We refer to the fallacy of ‘illegitimate totality transfer’ later in this piece.
30. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, p. 33
 31. Grant R. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, (1991) p. 66
 32. David Alan Black, *Linguistics for Students of NT Greek*, p. 121
 33. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, p. 33. Over 50-years ago Prof. James Barr (1961) argued that, “The etymology of a word is not a reliable guide to its meaning.” [Stanley E. Porter, *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism & Interpretation*, p. 33]
 34. Moises Silva & Walter Kaiser Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 57
 35. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, C. G. Bartholomew, D. J. Treier, & N. T. Wright (eds.) *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, p. 200
 36. Robert Cara, Word-Study Fallacies. Dr. Robert J. Cara is Professor of New Testament at the Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, N. Carolina.
 37. Gordon D. Fee, *Handbook of New Testament Exegesis*, (1993) p. 27, emphasis original. Clearly what is most relevant to sound exegesis is a word’s meaning (in its context) at the time when the NT documents were being written. In understanding the NT text, that ‘synchronic’ meaning ought to have priority over the word’s etymology in centuries & generations preceding the New Testament.
 38. Grant R. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, p. 518 emphasis added.
 39. W. Lee, *Triune God’s Revelation & His Move*, Chap. 12, Sect. 4 The quote, in context, reads: “All the groups in Christianity have been stranded on their own sands, like a boat stranded on sands in shallow water. The Catholic Church is stranded on their sands of superstitions. Most of the Protestant churches are stranded on the sands of superficiality. They are not deep; they are too shallow, on the surface. Nearly all the Protestant churches are stranded in their kind of lukewarm theology... Many have been *stranded on the sands of superstition, superficiality, and lukewarm theology.*” [W. Lee, *Triune God’s Revelation & His Move*, Chap. 12, Sect. 4, emphasis added]
 40. Arthur Gibson, *Biblical Semantic Logic*, 2nd ed., Sheffield Academic Press, 2001, p. 3.
 41. Max Turner, “*Modern Linguistics & the NT*” in Joel B. Green (ed.) *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, p. 153. The quote, in context, reads: Barr’s *Semantics of Biblical Language* “shook the foundations of the many attempts to do theology in the form of word studies, most notably the *TDNT*.” [Max Turner, “*Modern Linguistics & the NT*” in Joel B. Green (ed.) *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, p. 153] Dr. James Barr served as Professor of Old Testament Literature & Theology in the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, 1955-61, followed by appointments in the University of Manchester (UK), Oxford University (UK), & Vanderbilt University (US). He was a Fellow of the British Academy, Fellow of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, & the American Philosophical Society.
 42. Cameron Boyd-Taylor, “*The Semantics of Biblical Language Redux*,” in Robert James Victor Hiebert (ed.), “*Translation is Required*”: *The Septuagint in Retrospect & Prospect*, p. 41
 43. Michael J. Wilkins, *Concept of Disciple in Matthew’s Gospel: As Reflected in the Use of the...*p. 3. Dr. Craig Blomberg also refers to this ‘revolution’, when he points out that, since the German originals date from the 1930s, Kittel’s *TDNT* is characterized by a “lack of awareness of a virtual revolution in the field of linguistics during the past 60 years or so.” [Craig L. Blomberg, *Handbook of New Testament Exegesis*, p. 128]
 44. Claire S. Smith, *Pauline Communities as 'scholastic Communities': A Study of the Vocabulary...* p. 32
 45. Kenneth A. Cherney Jr., *General Linguistics & Some Exegetical Fallacies*, p. 179. Kittel’s work has been critiqued from numerous angles. Gregory P. Fewster says G. Kittel’s “*TDNT* fails to draw a necessary distinction between word and concept, while placing a great deal of emphasis on etymology.” [Gregory P. Fewster, *Creation Language in Romans 8: A Study in Monosemy*, p. 29] Profs. Porter & Pitts state that Kittel’s *TDNT* “frequently indulged in...the root fallacy and what Barr labeled ‘illegitimate totality transfer,’ involving the tendency of many contributors to Kittel’s dictionary to transfer the entire lexical meaning of a term into a single usage.” [Stanley E. Porter & Andrew Pitts (eds.), *The Language of the NT: Context, History, & Development*, p. 1]
 46. Stanley E. Porter “*The Basic Tools of Exegesis*,” in S. E. Porter (ed.) *Handbook to the Exegesis of the NT*, p. 33
 47. W. Lee, *Proper Aggressiveness of the Lord’s Serving Ones*, Chap. 8, Sect. 1
 48. James L. Boyer, *SEMANTICS IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION*, Grace Journal 3.2 (1962) pp. 25-26
 49. W. Lee, *Conclusion of the NT, (Msgs. 205-220)*, Chap. 3, Sect. 1
 50. LSM, *Lesson Book, Level 5: The Church— Vision & Building Up of the Church*, Chap. 3, Sect. 1, emphasis added
 51. “*Common Exegetical Fallacies*,” 01/09/2012, NT Greek Studies, emphasis added
 52. J. P. Louw & E. A. Nida, 1996, c1989. *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic 2nd edition.) United Bible Societies: New York. Eugene A. Nida (1914 – 2011) was one of the

- greatest linguists of the last century. He developed the 'dynamic-equivalence Bible-translation' theory, one of the founders of the modern discipline of Translation Studies. Dr. Nida was a charter member of Wycliffe Bible Translators.
53. Robert Cara, *Word-Study Fallacies*, Dr. Robert J. Cara is Professor of NT at the Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, NC.
 54. Grant R. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, p. 85
 55. David Alan Black, *Linguistics for Students of NT Greek*, p. 121
 56. Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *The Nature of Religious Language: A Colloquium*, p. 38
 57. F. J. A. Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1898), p. 5, as cited by Roy Bowen Ward, "Ekklesia: A Word Study," *Restoration Quarterly*, Vol. 2 No. 4 (1958): pp. 164-79 from which we quote. Together with B. F. Westcott (1825-1901), F. J. A. Hort published *The New Testament in the Original Greek* in 1881. It is also known as the Westcott and Hort text, after its editors
 58. J. Y. Campbell, "The Origin & Meaning of the Christian Use of the Word EKKLESIA," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 49 (1948), p. 131, emphasis added as cited by Roy Bowen Ward, "Ekklesia: A Word Study," *Restoration Quarterly*, Vol. 2 No. 4 (1958): pp. 164-79 from which we quote.
 59. "Common Exegetical Fallacies," 01/09/2012, NT Greek Studies
 60. Robert I. Bradshaw, *Language*
 61. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, C. G. Bartholomew, D. J. Treier, & N. T. Wright (eds.) *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, p. 201
 62. Craig L. Blomberg, *Handbook of NT Exegesis*, pp. 136-7
 63. Larry Hurtado, "50th Anniversary of Barr's *Semantics of Biblical Language*" (Oct. 2011)
 64. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, C. G. Bartholomew, D. J. Treier, & N. T. Wright (eds.) *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, p. 201
 65. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, C. G. Bartholomew, D. J. Treier, & N. T. Wright (eds.) *Dictionary for Theol. Interp. of Bible*, p. 201
 66. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, C. G. Bartholomew, D. J. Treier, & N. T. Wright (eds.) *Dictionary for Theol. Interp. of Bible*, p. 201
 67. W. Lee, *Conclusion of the NT, (Msgs. 388-403)*, Chap. 6, Sect. 1
 68. W. Lee, *Fulfillment of the Tabernacle & the Offerings in the Writings of John*, Chap. 44, Sect. 4. Elsewhere W. Lee states "The Greek word rendered Advocate is *parakletos*, and it denotes one who is called to another's side to aid him, hence, a helper; one who offers legal aid or one who intercedes on behalf of someone else, hence, an advocate, counsel, or intercessor." (W. Lee, *Life-Study of 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude*, Chap. 13, Sect. 2, emphasis added.) On yet another occasion W. Lee says, "Paraclete is the anglicized form of the Greek word *parakletos*, which denotes one alongside who takes care of our cause, our affairs." (W. Lee *Fulfillment of the Tabernacle & the Offerings inJohn*, Chap. 43, Sect. 3.
 69. Gary M. Burge, *Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition*, pp. 6, 7, 8
 70. Grant R. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, p. 67
 71. Robert Cara explains and illustrates this fallacy, saying: "The reverse etymological fallacy occurs when the later historical usage of a word is considered primary for determining the earlier meaning of that word. Of course, this does not make sense logically, but sometimes the manner in which a pastor explains a Greek word may encourage some in the congregation to fall into this trap. For example,...[to] explain that the Greek word for power in the New Testament is *dynamis*, and in the 1860s, Alfred Nobel named his invention "dynamite" based on the Greek word *dynamis*. This is true and interesting. However, this does not give the interpreter of the New Testament more insight into the meaning of *dynamis* in Scripture. In fact, one may wrongly assume that the "power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:13) must be explosive power like dynamite as opposed to constant power like electrical power." [Robert Cara, *Word-Study Fallacies*] Dr. Robert J. Cara is Professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, NC
 72. W. Lee, *General Sketch of the NT in the Light of Christ & the Church, A - Part 2: Romans thro' Philemon*, Chap. 14, Sect. 4, emphasis added.
 73. Grant R. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, (1991) p. 70
 74. Andrew H. Trotter, Jr., *Interpreting the Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 9
 75. "Common Exegetical Fallacies," 01/09/2012, NT Greek Studies
 76. W. Lee, *Conclusion of the NT, (Msgs. 114-134)*, Chap. 3, Sect. 1, emphasis added
 77. Quoted by Anthony C. Thiselton, *SEMANTICS & NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION*, p. 84. A similar point is made by Martin Joos who says that what he calls "semantic axiom number one" is that in defining a word it must be made to "contribute least to the total message desirable from the passage where it is at home, rather than e.g. defining it according to some presumed etymology or semantic history." [Quoted by Anthony C. Thiselton, *SEMANTICS & NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION*, p. 84] Again, relying on etymology is something to be avoided.

78. W. Lee, *Economy of God & the Mystery of the Transmission of the Divine Trinity*, Chapter 2, Section 4 Elsewhere W. Lee says, “In Eph. 1:10, 3:9, and 1 Tim. 1:4, the main verses in which the Greek word *oikonomia* is used, some versions of the Bible rendered this word as dispensation. Dispensation is not a wrong translation, but its denotation has been spoiled. A better translation of the word *oikonomia* is administration or economy.” (W. Lee, *Central Line of the Divine Revelation*, Chap. 5, Sect. 1, emphasis added)
79. Thanos Zartaloudis, *Giorgio Agamben: Power, Law & the Uses of Criticism*, p. 58
80. W. Lee, *Life-study of 1 & 2 Chronicles*, p. 75 ...”
81. W. Lee, *Conclusion of the NT, (Msgs. 21-33)*, Chap. 4, Sect. 1, emphasis added
82. W. Lee, *Central Line of the Divine Revelation*, Chap. 5, Sect. 1
83. W. Lee, *Divine Dispensing for the Divine Economy*, Chap. 1, Sect. 1
84. W. Lee, *Central Line of the Divine Revelation*, Chap. 5, Sect. 1 Elsewhere he states that “when we use the word dispensation, we mean God’s household management, God’s arrangement, God’s plan. This is different from dispensing, which is the act of God’s dispensing Himself into us.” (W. Lee, *Conclusion of the NT, (Msgs. 221-239)*, Chap. 13, Sect. 3)
85. For example, W. Lee recounts: “In my own Christian life I have had this experience. At the very beginning of my salvation, I was very living. Immediately following a person’s salvation, he is living and desires to pray and know the Word. A young brother especially likes to obtain more knowledge. Accordingly, I was brought into contact with a Brethren group which was particularly strict in the study and exposition of the Word. For seven years I studied at the feet of the Brethren teachers. I attended almost every one of their meetings during this time. I listened to more than a thousand messages concerning all the types, prophecies, and expositions of book after book of the Bible. The Brethren spent a great deal of time studying Daniel chapters two, seven, nine, and eleven, especially the end of chapter nine concerning the seventy weeks and the second half of the last week, the last three and a half years of this age. During those seven years with the Brethren I was really “addicted” to their teachings.” [W. Lee, *General Sketch of the NT in the Light of Christ and the Church, A - Part 2: Romans through Philemon*, Chap. 6, Sect. 2]
86. Jewel Spears Brooker, *Mastery & Escape: T.S. Eliot & the Dialectic of Modernism*, p. 24. Jewel Spears Brooker is Professor Emerita of Literature at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida, USA
87. W. Lee, *Elders' Training, Book 2: Vision of the Lord's Recovery*, Chap. 1, Sect. 5, emphasis added
88. W. Lee, 1 Tim. 1:4, RcV. note #3, emphasis added
89. Anthony C. Thiselton, *SEMANTICS & NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION*, pp. 80-81
90. W. Lee, *Conclusion of the NT, (Msgs. 189-204)*, Chap. 1, Sect. 1
91. Grant R. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, p. 85
92. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, C. G. Bartholomew, D. J. Treier, & N. T. Wright (eds.) *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, p. 201
93. Revd Dr Will Adam, *Legal Flexibility & the Mission of the Church: Dispensation & Economy in Ecclesiastical Law*, (2011) p. 7, emphasis added
94. W. Lee, *Conclusion of the NT, (Msgs. 21-33)*, Chap. 4, Sect. 1
95. Stanley E. Porter “*The Basic Tools of Exegesis*,” in S. E. Porter (ed.) *Handbook to the Exegesis of the NT*, p. 33
96. Stanley E. Porter “*The Basic Tools of Exegesis*,” in S. E. Porter (ed.) *Handbook to the Exegesis of the NT*, p. 34
97. Rev. 2:1, note 2, RcV. The following root meanings are those presented by W. Lee in the RcV footnotes.
98. Paul Treblico, *Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, p. 437, note 135
99. W. Lee, *Service for the Building Up of the Church*, Chap. 1, Sect. 4 The quote, in context, reads: ““Of the seven churches in Asia, only the church in Philadelphia was approved by the Lord (Rev. 3:7-13). The word *Philadelphia* is composed of two Greek words, one based on *phileo*, which means “love,” and the other on *adelphos*, which means “brother.” Therefore, *Philadelphia* means “brotherly love.” **The church in Philadelphia was full of brotherly love and was therefore approved by the Lord.**” [W. Lee, *Service for the Building Up of the Church*, Chap. 1, Sect. 4, emphasis added] W. Lee asserts that the Lord’s approval of the Philadelphian church was due to their being “full of brotherly love” – a deduction based entirely on etymology of the city’s name.
100. John F. Swenson, “*Chicagoua/Chicago: The Origin, Meaning, & Etymology of a Place Name*,” ILLINOIS HISTORICAL JOURNAL Vol. 84 (Winter, 1991)
101. W. Lee, *Kernel of the Bible*, Chap. 4, Sect. 1. Plus he says, “Many Christians have been in the garlic room so long they can no longer sense the odor of garlic that is all around them. Day after day, many unconsciously worship idols, actually thinking they are worshipping God. Today’s Christianity is not only full of divisions and confusion; it is also full of idols. Furthermore, it is full of traditions...” (W. Lee, *Kernel of the Bible*, Chap. 9, Sect. 2)

102. W. Nee, *Messages for Building Up New Believers*, Vol. 3, Chap. 11, Sect. 10, It also appears in *Collected Works Vol. 50*: Chap. 11, Sect. 10
103. Lynn Hiles, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: An Open Letter...*, pp. 225-6, emphasis added. We don't commend this interpretation as preferable to LSM's; we regard both as equally tenuous and unsubstantiated in the absence of supporting evidence from the biblical text.
104. W. Lee, *Life-Study of Acts*, Chap. 41, Sect. 4
105. W. Lee, *Elders' Training, Book 10: The Eldership & the God-Ordained Way (2)*, Chap. 5, Sect. 17. It also appears in *Intrinsic Problem in the Lord's Recovery Today & Its Scriptural Remedy*, Chap. 3, Sect. 12.
106. W. Lee, *Organic Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ to be the Organism of the Processed & Dispensing Triune God*, Chap. 5, Sect. 3
107. The ESV Study Bible is typical of contemporary evangelical versions. It says, "*Nicolaitans*. Obviously a heretical Christian sect, but not identifiable with certainty from NT or extra-biblical evidence. Like the prophet Balaam, they seduced God's people to participate in idolatry and sexual immorality (2:14-15), perhaps disguising antinomian [law-free] license as freedom in Christ." [ESV footnote on Rev. 2:6] It also says, "As the Israelites migrated through the wilderness, the prophet *Balaam*, prevented from cursing them, advised Moab's king to seduce them into both sexual and spiritual adultery (Num. 25:1-2; 31:16). Likewise the *Nicolaitans*, though opposed in Ephesus, were spreading sexual and spiritual infidelity at Pergamum." [ESV footnote on Rev. 2:14-16] Footnotes on Revelation by Dr. Dennis E. Johnson of Westminster Seminary, CA.
108. W. Nee, *Collected Works, Vol. 4: The Christian (2)*, Chap. 5, Sect. 6
109. Paul Treblico, *Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, p. 318
110. Paul Treblico, *Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, pp. 318-9 quoting Prof. Richard Buackham, *Theology of the Book of Revelation*, (1993) p. 124
111. W. Lee, *Conclusion of the NT, (Msgs. 221-239)*, Chap. 5, Sect. 1
112. W. Lee, *Satanic Chaos in the Old Creation & the Divine Economy for the New Creation*, Chap. 3, Sect. 8
113. W. Lee, *Satanic Chaos in the Old Creation & the Divine Economy for the New Creation*, Chap. 4, Sect. 4
114. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, p. 33
115. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, p. 33
116. Moises Silva & Walter Kaiser Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 57
117. W. Nee, *Collected Works Vol. 62: Matured Leadings in the Lord's Recovery (2)*, Chap. 15, Sect. 1
118. W. Nee, *Collected Works, Vol. 62: Matured Leadings in the Lord's Recovery (2)*, Chap. 15, Sect. 4
119. W. Nee, *Collected Works Vol. 15: Study on Matthew*, Chap. 27, Sect. 5
120. Heb. 8:11, note #1, RcV.
121. John N. Darby's footnote on 1 Cor. 8:1 says, "Two Greek words are used for 'to know' in the New Testament - *ginosko* and *oida*. The former [*ginosko*] signifies objective knowledge, what a man has learned or acquired. The English expression 'being acquainted with' perhaps conveys the meaning. *Oida* conveys the thought of what is inward, the inward consciousness in the mind, intuitive knowledge not immediately derived from what is external...". Yet, as we shall see, most contemporary commentators (when they perceive a meaningful difference) take the opposite view.
122. J. Scott Duvall & J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, & Applying the Bible*
123. W. Nee, *Collected Works Vol. 15: Study on Matthew*, Chap. 27, Sect. 5
124. Moises Silva & Walter Kaiser Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 61
125. Douglas J. Moo, *Romans: NIV Application Commentary*, p. xxviii
126. Moises Silva & Walter Kaiser Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 61
127. Gregory C. Carlson, *Rock Solid Teacher: Discover the Joy of Teaching like Jesus*, p. 110
128. Kenneth S. Wuest, *Pastoral Epistles in the Greek NT*, p. 123 quoted by Dana Gould, *Shepherd's Notes: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*
129. Darby writes: Two Greek words are used for 'to know' in the New Testament--*ginosko* and *oida*. The former signifies objective knowledge, what a man has learned or acquired. The English expression 'being acquainted with' perhaps conveys the meaning. *Oida* conveys the thought of what is inward, the inward consciousness in the mind, intuitive knowledge not immediately derived from what is external. The difference between the two words is illustrated in John 8:55, 'ye know (*ginosko*) him not, but I know (*oida*) him,' in John 13:7, 'What I do thou dost not know (*oida*) now, but thou shalt know (*ginosko*) hereafter,' and in Heb. 8:11, 'they shall not teach. . .saying, Know (*ginosko*) the Lord; because all shall know (*oida*) me.' The word *oida* is used of Christ as knowing the Father, & as knowing the hypocrisy of the Scribes & Pharisees, of Paul's knowledge of 'a man in Christ,' & of the Christian's knowledge that he has eternal life. 'I know whom I

- have believed,' 2 Tim. 1:12 - I have the inward conscious knowledge of who the person is: see also 1 Cor. 16:15; 2 Tim. 3:14 & 15 - all of these refer to inward conscious knowledge. The difference between the significance of the two words is often slight & objective knowledge may pass into conscious knowledge, but not vice versa. The Greek for conscience is derived from oida: see ch. 4:4, 'I am conscious of nothing in myself,' that is, not conscious of any fault. In the present passage, 'We know that an idol is nothing' is conscious knowledge: 'we all have knowledge' & 'knowledge puffs up' is objective knowledge. 'If anyone think he knows (conscious knowledge), he knows (objectively) nothing yet as he ought to know it (objectively):' 'he is known (objectively) of him,' so 'knowledge,' ver. 10. [J. N. Darby footnote on 1 Cor. 8:1]
130. David Alan Black, *Using NT Greek in Ministry: A Practical Guide for Students & Ministers*, p. 99. David Alan Black (DTheol., University of Basel) is professor of New Testament at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Scot McKnight refers to this error as the 'Word-idea fallacy,' which he describes as assuming "that the study of a term is the study of an idea." (Scot McKnight, *Introducing New Testament Interpretation (Guides to NT Exegesis)*, p.)
131. Stanley E. Porter "The Basic Tools of Exegesis," in S. E. Porter (ed.) *Handbook to the Exegesis of the NT*, p. 33
132. Ben Cooper, *Incorporated Servant-hood: Commitment & Discipleship in the Gospel of Matthew*, p. 4
133. W. Lee, 2 Pet. 1:7, Rcv., note 2
134. W. Lee, *Life-Study of 2 Peter*, Chap. 6, Sect. 2
135. Jude 12, Rcv., note 2, emphasis added
136. Darrell L. Bock, Buist M. Fanning (eds.) *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art & Science of Exegesis*, p. 152. The quote, in context, reads: "Perhaps the most serious error is the selective evidence fallacy wherein one only cites the evidence that favors the interpretation one wants to defend."
137. Darrell L. Bock (ed.), *Bible Knowledge Word Study: Acts-Ephesians*, p. 295
138. The interior quote is from Dr. Craig Blomberg, who says in this context: "'Love' in 1 Cor. 13 is agape. But we must beware of over-exegeting this term. **It is not the word itself that conveys the sense of divine love but the context.** In 1st-century Greek agape was coming more and more into use, as the *philia* word-group (often used for 'brotherly' or 'friendship' love) increasingly came to mean 'kiss' in certain contexts. Thus the word agapao can be used inter-changeably with phileo (e.g. in Jn. 21:15-17) while in the LXX agapao can even refer to Ammon's incestuous love/lust for his sister Tamar (2 Sam. 13:1)." [Craig Blomberg, *NIV Application Commentary 1 Cor.*, p. 261, emphasis added]
139. W. Lee, 2 Pet. 1:7, Rcv., note 2
140. John Haralson Hayes, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*, p. 65
141. D. A. Carson (ed.), *Gospel According to John*, pp. 204-5, emphasis added
142. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, p. 50
143. W. Lee, *Fulfillment of the Tabernacle & the Offerings in the Writings of John*, Chap. 62, Sect. 1
144. Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus & the Gospels: An Introduction & Survey*, p. 418
145. Bauer, Danker, et. al. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament & Other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG). It says, "[*Agapao* and *phileo*] seem to be used interchangeably here; cf. the frequent interchange of synonyms elsewhere in the same chapter [*boskein - poimanein, arnia - probatia, elkuein - surein*]."
146. Louw J. P. & Nida Eugene A., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*
147. W. Lee, *God-ordained Way to Practice the NT Economy*, Chap. 8, Sect. 1
148. W. Lee, *Life-Study of John*, Ch. 39, Sect. 4
149. W. Lee, *Conclusion of the NT, (Msgs. 323-345)*, Chap. 22, Sect. 3
150. W. Lee, Heb. 4:12, Rcv., note #1
151. Gary Shogren, "But the Greek REALLY says..." *Why Greek and Hebrew are not needed in the pulpit, Part 2*, by Gary Shogren, PhD in New Testament Exegesis.
152. W. Lee, 1 Pet. 1:25, Rcv., note #1
153. Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude: An Exegetical & Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, p. 97
154. David L. Allen, *Hebrews: An Exegetical & Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, p. 123, emphasis added
155. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, p. 117 (perhaps an "unwarranted associative jump") quoted by William D. Barrick, "EXEGETICAL FALLACIES: COMMON INTERPRETIVE MISTAKES EVERY STUDENT MUST AVOID," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 19/1 (Spring 2008) pp. 15-27
156. William D. Barrick, "EXEGETICAL FALLACIES: COMMON INTERPRETIVE MISTAKES EVERY STUDENT MUST AVOID," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 19/1 (Spring 2008) p. 21
157. W. Lee, *Concerning the Triune God—the Father, the Son, & the Spirit*, Chap. 1, Sect. 5, emphasis added.
158. W. Lee, *Conclusion of the NT, (Msgs. 001-020)*, Chap. 9, Sect. 1, emphasis added. The quote, in context, reads: "Revelation 4:8 says, 'The four living creatures...have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God the

Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is coming.’ The mentioning of ‘holy’ three times, as in Isaiah 6:3, implies the thought of God being triune, as the mentioning of God’s existence with three tenses does. The emphasis here is that the Triune God is holy and is triply holy, referring to the quality of God’s nature—God’s being.”

159. W. Lee, *Ten Lines in the Bible*, Chap. 1, Sect. 1, emphasis added. Along the same lines, W. Lee writes, elsewhere: “Holy, holy, holy, Jehovah of hosts’ (Isa. 6:3, 8). According to the Old Testament, the priests referred to Jehovah three times in succession when they blessed the people. In a similar fashion, the seraphim in the heavens say ‘holy’ three times in succession when they praise God. When they praise God, they say, ‘Holy, holy, holy,’ because the God whom they praise is triune. In verse 8 the God whom they praise refers to Himself in the plural with the word *Us.... Holy, holy, holy’* (Rev. 4:8) Just as there are verses in the Old Testament that refer to the name Jehovah and to the word holy three times in succession, there are verses in the New Testament that refer to Your and to the word holy three times in succession. In the Old Testament the priests on earth blessed the people in the name of Jehovah three times, and the seraphim in the heavens praised God three times, referring to Him as holy each time. In the New Testament the believers on earth refer to God as ‘Your’ three times in their prayer, and the four living creatures in the heavens praise God three times, referring to Him as ‘holy’ each time. This is revealed *because the God* to whom we petition, pray, and praise *is triune.*” [W. Lee, *Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures*, Vol. 4, Chap. 1, Sect. 2]
160. W. Lee, *Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures*, Vol. 4, Chap. 1, Sect. 2, emphasis added. The quote in context reads: “In the Old Testament the priests on earth blessed the people in the name of Jehovah three times, and the seraphim in the heavens praised God three times, referring to Him as holy each time. In the New Testament the believers on earth refer to God as ‘Your’ three times in their prayer, and the four living creatures in the heavens praise God three times, referring to Him as ‘holy’ each time. This is revealed *because the God* to whom we petition, pray, and praise *is triune.*” [W. Lee, *Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures*, Vol. 4, Chap. 1, Sect. 2]
161. William D. Barrick, “*EXEGETICAL FALLACIES: COMMON INTERPRETIVE MISTAKES EVERY STUDENT MUST AVOID*,” The Master’s Seminary Journal 19/1 (Spring 2008) p. 21
162. W. Lee says, “A person who...*does not know Greek can be considered an amateur...*I never took a Greek class; neither was I taught...I am not a Greek scholar.” [W. Lee, *Vision, Living & Work of the Lord’s Serving Ones*, Chap. 14, Sect. 2, emphasis added] The phrase “does not know Greek,” ought to be understood as “does not know Greek *up to a certain level of proficiency.*” Since W. Lee admits “I am not a Greek scholar,” he is an ‘amateur’ in this field. He proceeds to recount his progress, saying, “I first learned the Greek alphabet and then read Greek grammar books...My knowledge of Greek gradually progressed from the alphabet, to the grammar with the language structure, and eventually to the study of different reference books.” [W. Lee, *Vision, Living & Work of the Lord’s Serving Ones*, Chap. 14, Sect. 2] Nevertheless, he remained (by conventional standards) an ‘amateur.’ I say this, not to denigrate W. Lee, but to provide an accurate assessment of his linguistic abilities in the biblical languages.
163. Gene L. Green, “*LEXICAL PRAGMATICS & BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION*,” JETS 50/4 (Dec. 2007) p. 809
164. Robert I Bradshaw, *Language*. The quote, in context, reads: “The root fallacy is the mistaken belief that a word’s meaning is the sum of its components. While this is sometimes true in the majority of cases it is not.”
165. When Hislop wrote *The Two Babylons*, the study of Assyria & Babylonia was in its infancy. “Great tracts of Babylonian life and history that were unknown in Hislop’s day have since been brought to light,” Prof. Bruce writes. “We now know that the original language of Babylonian religion, far from being what Hislop and his contemporaries called ‘Chaldee’ (which was really Aramaic), was not a Semitic language at all, not even the Semitic tongue now called Akkadian...but Sumerian, a language with no certain affinity to any other known language.” Sumerian, not Chaldee, was the language of primeval Babylon. Hence Hislop’s “etymological inventiveness which traced words...to ‘Chaldee’ roots,” is irrelevant in establishing linguistic links to Nimrod’s Babylon & Assyria. They are pseudo-science not science. “Hislop’s argument stands in need of radical revision,” Dr. Bruce concludes. It comes as no surprise then that modern Assyriology does not cite Hislop’s *Two Babylons*; it is a discredited source. Yet LSM & W. Lee cited it repeatedly. [F. F. Bruce, “*Babylon & Rome*,” The Evangelical Quarterly 13 (Oct. 15, 1941): p. 244 Dr. F. F. Bruce was Univ. of Manchester Professor of Biblical Exegesis] For more on this topic see my piece: “*AN LSM MYTH DEBUNKED—NIMROD, MADONNA & THE TWO BABYLONS*” (Jan. 2011)
166. W. Lee, *Organic Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ to be the Organism of the Processed & Dispensing Triune God*, Chap. 5, Sect. 3
167. Dr. Craig Blomberg includes this among “*Definitional Fallacies*,” one of which is: “Making an appeal to an unknown or unlikely meaning of a word, due to either the interpreter’s theological presuppositions or reliance on out-of-date or idiosyncratic secondary literature.” [Craig L. Blomberg, *A Handbook of NT Exegesis*, p. 136]