

WERE MAX RAPOPORT AND JOHN INGALLS "FORCED OUT"?

A small but persistent group has propagated a false narrative that leading brothers who brought "concerns" to Brother Lee in the 1970s and 1980s were subsequently forced out of the Lord's recovery for doing so. The facts of history tell a different story.

1970s – Max Rapoport

In February 1978 some brothers informed Brother Lee that one of the co-workers, Max Rapoport, was seeking to undermine his work and ministry and to incite a "revolution" among the younger saints in the local churches. By the Lord's leading Brother Lee did nothing to directly oppose Rapoport's efforts or to expose his misconduct. Instead, he began to travel and minister concerning the crucial need for every saint to have a personal time with the Lord every day in the Word and in prayer (*Life Messages*). He also released exceedingly rich ministry later published in books such as *The Experience of Christ* and *Life-study of Ephesians*. Rapoport had been cultivating a personal following among younger co-workers and elders, but the contrast between the riches of Brother Lee's ministry and the fleshly zeal that Rapoport promoted caused most of them to have a change of heart, so Rapoport's incipient rebellion collapsed. On August 13, 1978, one of the elders in Anaheim shared a message in a church meeting from First and Second Timothy and Titus concerning how important it is for a believer to take care of their conscience before God (1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2; 2 Tim. 1:3; Titus 1:15). Rapoport took personal offense, got up in the middle of the meeting and left. He never returned. No one took any action to force him out. In fact, Witness Lee did not speak publicly about this turmoil until a conference held September 29 to October 1, over six weeks after Rapoport left (*Truth Messages*, chapters 1 through 4), and then he spoke in principle only and named no one.

1988-1989 – John Ingalls et al

On July 10, 1988, John Ingalls and two other elders of the church in Anaheim went to see Brother Lee at his home and voiced "concerns" over many aspects of the direction of the work in the Lord's recovery. They proposed to gather the leading co-workers and elders to pray, study the situation according to the Bible, and then fellowship regarding their concerns. Brother Lee agreed that the proposal was good and asked them to decide upon a date for the meeting. The next day Ingalls called Brother Lee to inform him that the three were unable to decide upon a date, but that they would do so and let him know when it would be. They never did.

In Acts 15 we are presented with a model for how to properly handle matters that affect the truth, create dissension, and unsettle the churches—"And the apostles and the elders were gathered together to see about this matter" (v. 6). In surveying the situation among the churches at the end of the 1980s, Brother Lee reiterated to the co-workers and elders the biblical way to handle such matters.

The proper way to take care of the problems in the Lord's recovery is through the proper and common fellowship of the Body. We should have a common fellowship, not the fellowship of a small nucleus or small circle. This kind of fellowship should be in love. If we are short of love, we are disqualified. The proper and common fellowship of the Body is without any private circle, without any party spirit, and without any hidden secrecies. (*Elders' Training, Book 10: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way*, 16)

Acts 15:6 shows us that this common fellowship is realized in the fellowship among the apostles, who bear responsibility for the church universally, and the elders, who care for the church locally. Thus, he went on to say:

In Acts 15 a proper, open conference with the leading ones took place in Jerusalem to consider the matter of circumcision and the faith. It was a big problem among the churches at Paul's time, but the brothers did nothing secretly, and they did not form parties. Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem in order to have a proper fellowship with the elders and the other apostles (vv. 2-21). (*Elders' Training, Book 10: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way (2)*, 16)

Brother Lee encouraged the brothers to take the biblical way to have proper fellowship. Instead, they chose to call secret meetings with select invitees, even conducting such meetings at the same time that the co-workers and elders were gathered together for fellowship. Rather than opening their concerns to all the leading brothers in the recovery for fellowship, the dissenting ones acted in a conspiratorial manner, holding private meetings and traveling to spread rumors and hearsay in their messages. Ingalls did this in Charlotte, Greensboro, Raleigh, Miami, Phoenix, San Diego, Long Beach, Irvine, Huntington Beach, and Anaheim.

The allegation that the leading brothers who raised their concerns to Brother Lee were forced out of the recovery falls flat upon closer inspection. Beginning from the middle of 1988, Ingalls and others began to openly speak against the ministry of Brother Lee. Their opposing speaking intensified at the beginning of 1989. By that time one of the three elders who had been in the July 1988 meeting with Brother Lee had resigned. On March 5, 1989, the church in Anaheim held its annual members' meeting, at which one director of the church corporation whose term had expired, Minoru Chen, was put forward for re-election. A young brother who supported Ingalls was also nominated to replace Minoru Chen, who was both a church elder and current director. The saints voted 195 to 69 to re-elect Minoru Chen. Following this overwhelming rejection, on March 19, 1989, Ingalls and the other dissenting elder resigned from the eldership. During his announcement, and speaking for both of them, Ingalls stated:

And, we also feel that many of you feel strongly that you'd like to take a certain direction, and we feel as elders we cannot really lead you in that direction. So, I think we would just like not to frustrate you either, and let you, you know, go on with the Lord in the way that you feel you should.

These words indicate that Ingalls and his fellow elder were not forced out of the eldership by Brother Lee or by anyone else. They resigned voluntarily when it became clear that the vast majority of the saints in the church did not share their dissenting views and were not willing to follow them.

Some have alleged that rebellions in the recovery have been dealt with by assassinating the character of those who spoke up against Brother Lee. While the leading ones who participated in the rebellion were very active in conducting meetings and corresponding in secrecy, they were also very active in speaking against Brother Lee and his ministry in small group gatherings in homes and during messages they gave in various localities and in conferences. Therefore the opposition of these leading ones to Brother Lee's ministry was well known to the saints. Once their works and speaking had become fully manifested to the churches through their own activities, even to the point that they left the recovery of their own accord and sought to influence others to do the same, it became necessary for the churches to mark the opposing ones as causes of stumbling and division. On this point the Bible is very clear, "Now I exhort you, brothers, to mark those who make divisions and causes of stumbling contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them" (Rom. 16:17).

The facts contradict the false narrative that has been promulgated on the Internet. Rather than being vindictively forced out, Rapoport and Ingalls found that they did not enjoy the support of the saints as they had hoped and assumed they would. In both cases, realizing that they had failed in their attempts to draw away the saints after themselves (Acts 20:30), the dissenting brothers left.