

A Letter of Fellowship and Warning to the Churches with All the Saints in Mexico Concerning a Present Danger among Us

January 2009

Since the Lord's recovery came to Mexico over 30 years ago, seventy-seven churches have been raised up with nearly 4,000 saints. This is the Lord's blessing on the one accord under the leadership of the New Testament ministry. We are thankful for all the Lord has done over this time. As leading ones in the churches and the work, our responsibility in shepherding the flock of God includes not only cherishing and nourishing but, from time to time as needed, trumpeting a warning to the saints.

Ezekiel 33:6: "But if the watchman sees the sword come and does not blow the trumpet and the people are not warned and the sword comes and takes someone away from them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand."

Acts 20:26-31a: "Therefore I testify to you on this day that I am clean from the blood of all men, for I did not shrink from declaring to you all the counsel of God. Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. And from among you yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore watch..."

The leading brothers of the churches and the co-workers in Mexico are constrained to fellowship with all the saints concerning a serious problem that has recently begun to affect the Lord's recovery in our country. This problem comes from a group of workers who were once one with the Lord's recovery in the truth of God's New Testament economy and in the fellowship of the churches. It grieves us that they have gradually departed from both of these basic matters of the Lord's recovery. They have deviated from the New Testament ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, through which the Lord's recovery came to us, to a different teaching based upon a different vision. Sadly, they have established a sectarian practice that deviates from the biblical pattern the Lord has established among us for more than eighty years. However, they claim to be the unique move of the Lord today, and they promote their leader as uniquely commissioned to speak for God and to lead the work in the Spanish-speaking world. They have a history of spreading their different work under the name of the Lord's recovery to many countries around the globe, thus causing confusion and division wherever they go. Our fellowship in this letter is necessary because divisive workers have now come to Mexico with the intention to spread their work. Therefore, we must fellowship with you all about how to face this problem that has come to us.

We are speaking of the work of Dong Yu Lan and his co-workers from South America. Since the co-workers in the Lord's recovery, including Brother Lee, have exercised patience toward Brother Dong and his co-workers for many years, the saints may not be aware of the problems caused by this work. The truth is that Brother Dong and his co-workers are spreading a different ministry with different publications and many errant teachings and practices. At the same time, they have boldly proclaimed the superiority of their ministry and work and have spread their dissenting work without regard for the

existing churches and saints in the Lord's recovery. They have even established separate meetings in localities where churches already exist. On the one hand, this is a tragedy that saddens us all. On the other hand, we should not be surprised or alarmed; this is nothing new to the Lord's recovery or to the history of the church in the New Testament. The apostle Paul warned the elders in Ephesus that this very thing would happen after his departure.

And from among you yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them. (Acts 20:30)

In order to face this problem in an adequate way, the saints must understand the roots of this deviation, how it was brought to Mexico and what its leaders plan for its future here.

THE ROOTS OF DEVIATION

In 1984 Brother Lee went to Brazil and commended the saints for their use of the Life-study messages and their ability to apprehend the crucial points in his speaking. However, shortly after that time Brother Dong started on an independent course and began to establish his own ministry and work within the Lord's recovery. We can trace the roots of his deviation to 1985, when he began to supplant the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee with his own interpretations of that ministry. Contrary to Brother Lee's earlier appraisal, Brother Dong claimed that the Latin American saints could not understand the truths Witness Lee taught and therefore needed Brother Dong to digest and interpret Witness Lee's ministry for them. Brother Dong's claim is completely unfounded. Our experience testifies that the ministry of Witness Lee needs no interpretation or revision. Saints throughout Mexico, including the newly saved, have been greatly enriched by the high peaks of the truth revealed by this ministry. The ministry of the age of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee has spread throughout the earth and is understood, appreciated, and practiced by people of many diverse cultures and educational levels. This ministry has been effective in urban areas, rural villages, and remote islands. All believers in all places can receive and benefit from the direct, unfiltered words of Brother Nee and Brother Lee.

Because Brother Lee did not exercise control over the co-workers, he did not stop Dong Yu Lan from doing his independent work. However, on many occasions Brother Lee publicly brought to light the spiritual principles that were being violated. He also addressed these issues directly and specifically with Brother Dong and some of his co-workers in more private fellowship and made it clear that he did not agree with their practices. Any among us can read the series of messages that are published as the *Elders' Training* series and understand Brother Lee's very strong warnings against carrying out a separate work in the Lord's recovery, against adulterating his ministry, and concerning the danger of multiple publications in the Lord's recovery. He also spoke strongly against any co-worker keeping his own private region apart from the co-workers who labor in other areas of the earth. He said then that these practices would lead to division. These messages were given from 1984 through 1991, yet they were not heeded by Brother Dong or his co-workers. In spite of Brother Lee's direct and explicit warnings, Brother Dong increased his publication work and extended his assumed authority over many churches in South America.

Because Brother Dong's work was done far away in South America and largely in isolation from the rest of the churches, most of the recovery did not know what was developing there. Brother Lee and the co-workers exercised a long period of forbearance in this matter with the hope that there could be a change in Brother Dong and his co-workers. Before Brother Lee went to be with the Lord in 1997, Brother Dong and his co-workers circulated an unseemly letter among the Spanish-speaking churches, causing serious problems. When the co-workers throughout the Lord's recovery raised their serious concerns about its content, Brother Dong and his co-workers joined them in writing to the Spanish-speaking churches, saying:

We agree that there should be only one publication work in the Lord's recovery and in the whole earth, that is, the one that publishes and distributes the writings of Brothers Watchman Nee and Witness Lee...we agree that today no other publications should appear to compete with, or even worse, replace the books of these two servants of the Lord.

It was soon apparent, however, that Brother Dong had no intention of curtailing the promotion of his own publications. Rather, he became increasingly aggressive to export his ministry and work to Africa, Europe, Central America, and North America. This different and competing ministry in the Lord's recovery caused confusion and frustration to the churches and the saints in many parts of the earth. This situation compelled the co-workers from around the earth to address it with much prayer and fellowship at their gatherings. Some of the co-workers from Mexico participated in these gatherings. Thus, the facts of the problem became well known to all the co-workers in the Lord's recovery. In one of the times of fellowship, brothers from Mexico expressed their concern regarding the spread of Brother Dong's publications into other countries, including Mexico. Based on the co-workers' fellowship, a co-worker from Mexico told Brother Dong that he should not bring his publications into Mexico.

In 2005 co-workers representing the Lord's move in every part of the earth wrote to Brother Dong in love to soberly express their concern regarding his deviations in teaching, work, and practice and regarding the confusion and division his work was causing. They exhorted him to restrict himself to use only the publications of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee in carrying out the work of the Lord's recovery. Some co-workers from Mexico participated in that fellowship and endorsed the very serious tone and content of that letter. In their letter the brothers appealed to Brother Dong to acknowledge that the governing principle of the church, the ministry, and the work in the Lord's recovery is the oneness of the Body of Christ:

What God needs to accomplish in these last days is the building up of the one Body of Christ through His lovers on every continent and in every country throughout the earth. Today in the Lord's recovery this must be the controlling vision of our work; otherwise, we will repeat the sad history of Christianity and further frustrate God's purpose on the earth.

The letter frankly pointed out the problems caused by the publication of Brother Dong's own books:

Because of this controlling vision concerning the Body of Christ universally, we have become quite concerned about one particular matter among us today in the Lord's

recovery—the matter of the publication work...if there are multiple publications by different ministers...there will be a definite danger of multiple leaderships among us.

Furthermore, in their letter the co-workers acknowledged that they had received many disturbing reports and had read transcribed messages that revealed the unhealthy teaching of Brother Dong and his co-workers. Their different speaking included the claim that Brother Dong had received further revelation that made the Recovery Version out of date. One of Brother Dong's disturbing "new" revelations asserted that Matthew, Mark, and Luke were not in the Spirit when they wrote their Gospels. After the co-workers mentioned a number of Brother Dong's other teachings that contradicted the Bible and the ministry of Brother Nee and Brother Lee, they concluded:

Indeed, such speaking is contrary to the Word of God and can lead the believers astray and create much dissension, division, and damage to the Body of Christ.... [There] are erroneous, different teachings and speaking in your ministry and publications that differ from the Word of God. We cannot consider such speaking as part of the New Testament ministry.

The brothers then stressed that Brother Dong's teaching and publications were causing confusion and contention in churches all over the earth. The brothers implored Brother Dong to end his rivalry with the general ministry in the Lord's recovery in order to solve the problems he had caused. It is regrettable that Brother Dong did not heed that serious fellowship. Instead he and his co-workers said that the co-workers had risked offending the Holy Spirit and committing a sin that would not be forgiven in this age or in the age to come by writing to him of their concerns with his work.

In the past few years Brother Dong and his co-workers have become more and more extreme in their contention that they are the "last recovery" and the "organic recovery" as opposed to the "judicial recovery." By saying this they mean that they are the current recovery in the Spirit in contrast to the churches that remain under the "judicial" ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. They use the word "judicial" to mean legal and in dead letters and apply this term to the ministry of Paul in the New Testament and to the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. Thus they consider those not under their work as the "judicial recovery," a stage of the recovery that not only they have left, but the Lord has left as well. In a conference in September 2007 in Piracicaba, Brazil, Brother Dong expressed this standing:

Some people, however, purposely accuse the churches in South America of having deviated from the recovery...They claim that we in Brazil have left the recovery. I will respond this way: the churches in Brazil, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, have indeed left the "judicial recovery."

Thus, Brother Dong labels the Lord's recovery today as the "judicial recovery," which should be left.

Such teachings reflect the deviation of Brother Dong and his co-workers into a sectarian work formed around a leader and his visions, teachings, and practices. Rather than being honest in their dissension and separation, their workers pretend at times to be one with the Lord's recovery in order to "draw away the disciples after them." For this reason, it is critical that all the saints in Mexico take heed to this warning letter and not be deceived by any "sleight of men" (Ephesians 4:14).

CAUSING DIVISION IN MEXICO

As you can understand from this history, we brothers in Mexico have been concerned about Brother Dong's different teachings for a long time and have to take action to protect the churches here from these teachings. In a 2007 conference in London, Canada, Brother Dong gave this assessment of the Lord's recovery in Mexico:

Yes, the Bible does say that the gospel of the kingdom must be preached to the whole inhabited earth...But for the time being this has been practiced only in South America...In Mexico, I never heard them talk about this gospel of the kingdom. They talk about the church; the church is still in that stage of the church to the church. They have not seen yet that the Lord put us in the church for the kingdom. They haven't had this light yet.

Recently a brother who has been active in Brother Dong's work moved to Toluca from Brazil for the purpose of employment. This young brother came to some church meetings in Mexico City, where he was received in the church's fellowship. We then learned that other workers from Brother Dong were planning to come to Toluca, where the saints had already begun to take the Lord's table as the church. We therefore wrote to Brother Dong and his co-workers on September 30, 2008, to inform them of our long-standing work in Toluca and of the saints who were already meeting there. We further asked them not to start a separate work or a separate meeting in Toluca and not to work in Mexico apart from the established churches and workers. Furthermore, the letter reiterated that they should not bring Brother Dong's ministry and publications to Mexico. We testified of the blessing of the one work in Mexico:

In Mexico we have paid a great price to labor together in a blended, coordinated way in everything we are doing...We would surely feel very uncomfortable and unpleasant if any workers are sent here to work who do not regard or treasure this fellowship and this coordination.

Immediately, one of Brother Dong's leading co-workers responded to our letter:

...we cannot accept what you are asking us in the letter. We have to and we will take care of our saints, wherever they are....but we will not... [have] separate meetings where there is already a church.

What they refuse to accept is our request "to please not send any workers to this city, or for that matter, any city in Mexico, in an independent and isolated way." In our experience, a coordinated work carried out in the fellowship of the Body has proven to be the unique way to care for all the saints. Further, the term "our saints" illustrates the sectarian nature of Brother Dong's work. It is against the truth to say that the saints belong to any work or to any worker. Neither should the saints be divided by language, nationality, or ethnicity. In the church as the one new man, all natural distinctions have been eliminated and Christ is all and in all (Colossians 3:10-11).

In his response, Dong Yu Lan's worker promised the brothers in Mexico, "But we will not... [have] separate meetings where there is already a church." Despite this promise, in less than two months a team of Brother Dong's workers joined with the brother in Toluca and began a meeting of their own, which they proclaimed as "the first meeting of the church in Toluca." Since they had been informed of our work in Toluca and of the saints

meeting there, the meeting they established can only be considered as an intentional disregard of our fellowship and the establishment of a sect, a division.

FUTURE PLANS FOR DONG YU LAN'S WORK IN MEXICO

In mid-November 2008, a public report was given in Sao Paulo of a planned, full-scale campaign to expand Brother Dong's work in Mexico. The speaker said that Brother Dong's workers will go to Mexico with two vans, one hundred banners, and teams of workers. In fact, it has been reported to us just this past week that over twenty-five workers are on their way to Mexico to help carry out this aggressive, deliberate campaign to spread Brother Dong's sectarian work in Mexico.

Dong Yu Lan's workers have already set up second "Lord's tables" where churches exist in over thirty cities on four continents. There is every reason to expect that they will do the same thing throughout Mexico as well.

Even if they only go to localities in which there are no churches, as they sometimes claim, the fact that they are carrying out a work without any fellowship with existing churches or workers is itself divisive. Brother Lee told us:

I regret to say that some of the saints who have read our publications concerning the ground of locality have used them to cause division. Some have said that they are taking the ground of locality in a certain city and that they do not want to have fellowship with others. This is a true division. The ground of locality is for oneness, not for division. If we take the ground of locality as a standing to be independent from other believers, we are divisive. (Witness Lee, *Enjoying the Riches of Christ for the Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ*, pp. 150-151)

CALL TO A CORPORATE RESPONSE

Due to the urgency of the situation and the fact that Brother Dong's work has already established the first division in Mexico and plans to send many workers to Mexico, we must rise up in one accord to fulfill the charge of the Scriptures in order to protect the saints from participating in sectarian meetings and a divisive work.

Romans 16:17: "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."

Note 2 says: "In chapter 14 Paul was liberal and gracious regarding the receiving of those who differ in doctrine or practice. Here, however, he is unyielding and resolute in saying that we must turn away from those who are dissenting, who make divisions, and who make causes of stumbling. The purpose in both cases is the preserving of the oneness of the Body of Christ that we may have the normal church life."

Titus 3:10: "A factious man, after a first and second admonition, refuse."

Note 2 says: "In order to maintain good order in the church, a factious, divisive person should be refused, rejected, after a first and second admonition. This is done to stop intercourse with a contagiously divisive person for the church's profit."

Therefore, if any come among you to promote Dong Yu Lan's divisive work, we should not have contact with them or allow them to come into our homes or our meetings. On the other hand, if saints under the influence of Dong Yu Lan's work visit you or the church meetings in Mexico, we ask that they first be brought to the leading brothers in your locality that their fellowship and participation in the church life may be healthy and in the light.

In giving this warning for the protection of the saints in Mexico, the churches, and the Lord's work, we would also like to make it clear to all that we recognize all those who have believed into Christ as our brothers and fellow-members of the Body of Christ. We also acknowledge the part others may have in preaching the gospel and edifying the believers. As long as they preach Christ, we rejoice. However, just as we must practice Romans 14 to receive all those whom Christ has received, we must also practice Romans 16 to mark those who make divisions. Therefore, it is necessary to warn the saints in the Lord's recovery about the true situation of Dong Yu Lan, his co-workers, and their work.

We ask all of you to consider this warning soberly before the Lord and to pray for the preservation of the testimony of oneness in the churches in Mexico.

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[Signatures on file]