

May 10, 2009

To: All the churches and saints in South Africa

Re: A Letter of Warning

Dear saints,

On April 4, 2009, the co-workers in the Lord's recovery issued a warning statement to all of the churches and saints in the recovery concerning the teachings and practices of Dong Yu Lan and his co-workers who promote his work. By this letter we affirm our agreement with the co-workers' letter and seek to educate the saints in South Africa concerning the history of problems caused by this work in South Africa.

From the beginning of the Lord's recovery in South Africa over thirty years ago, the churches here have enjoyed the one fellowship of the local churches under the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. Since that time we have endeavoured to remain one with all the local churches around the globe and to receive and follow the ministry of the age. As genuine local churches we have always received saints of all backgrounds as they visited or moved to South Africa.

However, in the past few years a work that is very different from the Lord's recovery has come among us and caused much confusion and division. This work is different in its teachings, in its practices and in its results. This work is the work of Brother Dong Yu Lan.

At Witness Lee's encouragement, Brothers James Lee and Dick Taylor began in 1995 to visit the churches in Africa and South Africa more frequently. In the last few years a number of other brothers have come here to strengthen the churches in South Africa. All of these brothers, unlike those from Dong Yu Lan's work, have laboured together with us to build up the churches in oneness and did not cause division.

There are a number of strange and fanciful teachings being propagated by Brother Dong's workers that are different from the general ministry received by the churches in the Lord's recovery. Some of these teachings are:

- A peculiar interpretation of the vision of the woman, the dragon and the man-child in Revelation 12 including portraying Europe and Asia as the dragon, South America as the wilderness and Africa as a foetus somehow representing the man-child.
- Unscriptural views such as that the writers of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke were not in the Spirit when they wrote their gospels but only John was when he wrote his gospel.
- Believers should only care for spirit and life, not the teaching of the truth; to study the truth is dead, in the mind and apart from the Spirit.
- That the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee and the writings of the Apostle Paul in the New Testament were "judicial," which in their definition means: in knowledge, in letters and therefore dead.
- In contrast, Dong Yu Lan's ministry is the "organic ministry," the ministry of Spirit and life, like the Apostle John's ministry and shall continue until the end of the age.

The following accounts of events in South Africa make clear the divisive and independent nature of Brother Dong's work.

Establishing Sectarian "Table" Meetings in Johannesburg and Roodepoort

From the early days of the Lord's recovery we have always exercised not to be careless in establishing a church. We have also recognized that the Lord's table meeting in particular represents the church's stand as a local expression of the Body of Christ. For this reason Brother Nee taught:

Wherever we go, we first must find *whether or not a church exists* in that locality. It is not a matter of whether or not the church there is strong. That is another matter. It does not matter whether or not the church there is spiritual... If there is a local church in a locality, we must not

set up another. We must fear setting up another table for the breaking of bread. This is a terrible thing. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, vol. 56: The Open Door & The Present Testimony*, p. 380)

Brother Dong's workers in South Africa have ignored this foundational principle in at least two cases—Johannesburg and Roodepoort.

Johannesburg

The work of the Lord's recovery began in Johannesburg in late 1996. Dong Yu Lan's workers first came to Johannesburg around the year 2000 and became more active throughout South Africa in 2005, when Helcio Almeida, a close co-worker of Brother Dong, began to work in South Africa. Since then, Helcio and others with him have contacted many saints and have drawn some of the saints out of the church in Johannesburg to build up their separate work. They promoted and distributed "Daily Food," a published series of Brother Dong's teachings. As the examples above illustrate, these teachings are often contrary to the truth of the Bible and to the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. Confusion has been sown among the saints due to the propagation of the strange and different teachings contained in these publications and spoken by Brother Dong's workers.

As their work grew, Brother Dong's workers withdrew from the church in Johannesburg and formed a division. His workers declared Johannesburg to be the centre of Brother Dong's work in Africa. They have held conferences and trainings in Johannesburg completely apart from the fellowship of the churches. They started meeting separately, calling their meetings "the church in Johannesburg" and establishing a separate "table" meeting. The attached pictures, which were posted on the Internet, show one of Dong Yu Lan's followers with a sign proclaiming their meetings as "the church in Johannesburg."

Their "table" meeting was held in Rosettenville, a district within Johannesburg, in direct violation of the truth of the ground of the church. Brother Dong's workers established their meetings in full knowledge that there was already a church in Johannesburg breaking bread at the Lord's table. Thus, what they started was not the church in Johannesburg as they claim but a sect. Dong Yu Lan's workers established their sectarian meetings without the prior knowledge of or fellowship with the leading ones in the church in Johannesburg. Their divisive work and meetings continue to the present day.

Roodepoort

The church in Roodepoort began the Lord's table meeting more than seventeen years ago. An email report dated May 14, 2007, also posted on the Internet, recounts how two of Dong Yu Lan's workers travelled to Roodepoort to carry out a divisive work there:

On May 5, the Lord brought us to the city of Roodeport [sic], South Africa, myself and brother [name redacted], to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, find the sons of Peace and to establish the King's table!...Hallelujah for on the 13th we broke the Bread with 9 local saints and some children giving testimony that the Lord of Roodeport is the Lord Jesus Christ!

They gathered together a small number of local people and began to meet separately from the church in Roodepoort, including having a separate "table" meeting. They did so without regard for the longstanding Lord's table of the church there. Their work was done without the knowledge of the brothers in the church in Roodepoort. Brother Dong's workers cannot claim ignorance of the existing church since Dong Yu Lan and Ezra Ma visited the church in Roodepoort in the 1990s.

Other Damages Caused by Dong Yu Lan's Workers

Pretoria

The church in Pretoria began to meet in the mid-1970s as the first church in South Africa. It has recently suffered from the confusion wrought by the different teachings and practices of Brother

Dong's work. Helcio Almeida, Brother Dong's leading co-worker in all of Africa, falsely claimed to be an elder of the church in Pretoria and used this pretext to address delicate personal matters involving some of the saints. Some of Brother Dong's workers verbally disparaged the church in Pretoria and the Living Stream Ministry to some of the saints in the church there. They attempted to recruit some from the church for Brother Dong's work and made many attempts to secretly promote his work.

Zambia

Because the brothers in the churches in South Africa thought Dong Yu Lan's workers were one with the Lord's recovery, they freely gave these workers contact information for the saints in Zambia. Using this information Brother Dong's workers contacted many of the Zambian saints and drew about half of them away from the churches and into Brother Dong's work.

When Dong Yu Lan's workers discovered that a brother in Zambia still followed the ministry of the age, they forced him out of the house he was living in and confiscated six boxes of ministry books and Recovery Versions that the South African churches had purchased for distribution in Zambia. When brothers from South Africa visited Lusaka, one of Brother Dong's workers promised to return the books to South Africa. Although a great deal of time has passed since that promise, the books have not been returned.

An Errant Work Spreading throughout the Region

It is clear that without regard for the churches that have been here for years and without fellowship with the leading ones or co-workers labouring in this area, Dong Yu Lan and his workers are actively pursuing the expansion of their work in South Africa and the spread of that work elsewhere in this region. Brother Dong's workers have held conferences and established a "permanent" Gospel Propagation Preparation (GPP) training in Johannesburg. They have also conducted GPP trainings in Lusaka, Zambia. Their complete disregard of the churches that are standing for the oneness of the Body in South Africa and the surrounding region is damaging to the testimony of oneness and reveals the sectarian nature of that work.

Helcio Almeida has been referred to as the "Coordina la Obra en Africa" (Coordinator of the Work in Africa). If Helcio is indeed coordinating anything in Africa, the saints can be assured that he is not coordinating it with any of the co-workers or churches in South Africa. In 2006 Helcio reported that Brother Dong's work was active in Soweto, Cape Town, Durban, and Nellspruit. In November 2008 he talked of visiting four countries—South Africa, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Angola—and of holding GPP's in three of them. He also said that the most recent GPP in South Africa had participants from ten nearby countries. These same reports show that work has spread to several other surrounding countries, including Zambia, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland. All of this work has been carried out independently with no coordination whatsoever with the churches or the co-workers serving here. This work has also brought division and confusion to many other places.

A Warning

It is abundantly clear that the work of Dong Yu Lan in South Africa is by nature a divisive work operating without regard for the existing churches and saints, spreading its different teachings and practices, and causing division. We have practiced forbearance for several years desiring that there would be a change in this work and in these workers even while their divisiveness grew worse and worse. However, based upon the Scriptures and much prayer and fellowship, we must warn the saints in the churches to beware of this sectarian work and not to participate in its sins. Although these workers are believers, because of their strange and divisive teachings and practices and in obedience to Scripture we mark them as causes of division before the saints.

In Romans 16:17, Paul instructed us to "mark those who make divisions and causes of stumbling contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them." Footnote 2 on "turn away from them" in the Recovery Version says,

In ch. 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.

In Titus 3:10, Paul exhorts, "A factious man, after a first and second admonition, refuse." Footnote 2 on the word "refuse" says,

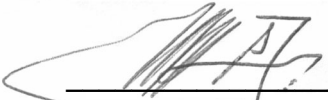
In order to maintain good order in the church, a factious, divisive person should be refused, rejected, after a first and second admonition. This is done to stop intercourse with a contagiously divisive person for the church's profit.

This is a sober and serious warning to all the saints in the churches in South Africa. All of us should heed this warning for the health of the churches and to preserve the oneness of the Body of Christ. Although we love all the brothers, we have the obligation to warn the churches and the saints concerning divisive workers. We therefore mark the work of Dong Yu Lan as a cause of division.

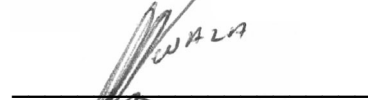
If you have any questions concerning this action, we ask that you fellowship with the leading brothers in your locality. We also ask that you fellowship with the leading brothers if you are contacted by this work in any way. Our concern in this matter, as in all else involving the churches in South Africa, is the spiritual health and well-being of the saints and the churches.

Your brothers and fellow slaves in Christ,

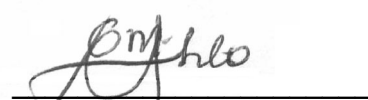
For the church in Johannesburg



Paulos F. Momavila

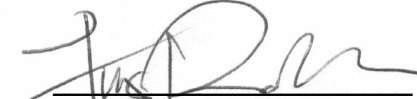


Bheki Twala



Ndiphiwe Mehlo

For the church in Pretoria



Luis F. Rocha



John Hwang

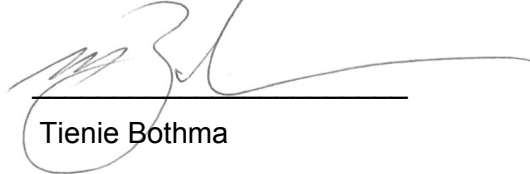
For the church in Roodepoort



Mike Reitz



Richard Du Preez



Tienie Bothma