

A FAITHFUL WITNESS

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A LETTER  
OF  
FELLOWSHIP  
AND  
WARNING



THE LORD'S  
TABLE  
AND THE ONENESS  
OF THE BODY

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DEFENSE & CONFIRMATION PROJECT

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DCP is a project to defend and confirm the New Testament ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee and the practice of the local churches.

Phil. 1:7 – Even as it is right for me to think this concerning you all because you have me in your heart, since both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel you are all fellow partakers with me of grace.

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The article “Principles Concerning the Lord’s Table in View of the Oneness of the Body of Christ” in this book was compiled by Tony Espinosa and Bob Danker.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface .....	5
LETTER OF FELLOWSHIP AND WARNING .....	9
Background Leading to Deviation and Division .....	10
Different Teachings of Dong Yu Lan and His Co-workers .....	15
Practices of Dong Yu Lan and His Work Today: .....	22
Conclusion.....	27
A LETTER OF FELLOWSHIP FROM 21 CO-WORKERS TO BROTHER DONG YU LAN .....	33
PRINCIPLES CONCERNING THE LORD'S TABLE IN VIEW OF THE ONENESS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST.....	53
The Lord's Table Being a Matter of Utmost Seriousness Because It Involves the Body of Christ .....	54
The Proper Ground of the Church.....	55
A Matter of the Ground, Not of Condition.....	58
Tests of a Genuine Local Church.....	58
The Fellowship of the Body of Christ.....	60
Discerning the Body .....	65



## PREFACE

On April 4, 2009, a letter of fellowship and warning concerning Dong Yu Lan and his co-workers who promote his deviant teachings and divisive work was read to over 1,600 elders and responsible brothers at the International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones. The letter is signed by ninety-nine co-workers from six continents on behalf of all the co-workers in the Lord's recovery and is addressed to all the saints and churches in the Lord's recovery. Prior to the reading of the letter, Benson Phillips, Paul Wu, and Minoru Chen gave an introductory word.

Benson Phillips spoke of the co-workers' awareness of different teachings, even heresy, being spread and of divisions being formed by Dong Yu Lan and his co-workers. These errors have damaged the testimony of the Lord's recovery around the earth and caused damage and loss to believers both within and outside of the local churches.

Paul Wu affirmed the the co-workers' one accord in this matter:

I stand with all the fellowship of the brothers. We are standing here together for the testimony of the Lord's recovery. The brothers have spoken concerning the situation with Brother Dong in South America. In the past, over an extended period of time, we had much fellowship concerning this matter. We also had much fellowship with Brother Dong and his co-workers. It was truly our desire that the situation might be restored, lest we fall into the enemy's snare. Brother Dong was hoping that the brothers in Taiwan would stand with him; but today, standing here, we would like to tell all the brothers that we, the brothers in Taiwan, stand together with the brothers for the Lord's recovery. In a moment, the brothers will read to you the letter of warning that we prepared. It is also our desire that all the brothers here will likewise stand together with us for the testimony of the Lord's

recovery, so that the damage by the enemy would not continue to spread in the Lord's recovery.

Minoru Chen entreated those who are under this error:

I would like to say a word to all the saints who are under the influence of Brother Dong's ministry. I ask you not to reject but to consider this warning. I ask you to be open and not prejudiced. I ask you to check the facts. I ask you to seek and stand with the truth in God's Word. I ask you to study this ministry carefully. I ask you to exercise a deep discernment about the present situation to which you belong. I ask you to overcome natural affection and human feelings and any sense of loyalty or allegiance. I ask you to fear God rather than man. And I beg you to follow the footsteps of the one little flock of God on this earth today.

Finally, I would like to say a word to Brother Dong and his co-workers. I pray that you would humble yourselves before this warning, receive mercy and light from the Lord to have a change, repent from your errors, and follow closely this ministry again. Do not abandon the recovery and draw people away from it after yourselves. Consider not only how you began, but how you will end. Turn, our dear brothers, turn before it is too late.

In addition, in the article "Principles Concerning the Lord's Table in View of the Oneness of the Body of Christ," a crucial matter of truth and practice is addressed which bears particular importance for those in areas affected by Dong Yu Lan's work. The introduction to this article sets forth its burden:

The potential may now exist for those who have come out from the divisive influence of Dong Yu Lan's work to establish their own "tables" in haste, apart from the fellowship of the Body and thus with the risk of causing greater harm to the Lord's testimony. May the Lord use this article, which presents excerpts from the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, to impress His loving seekers that the establishing of the Lord's table is a weighty matter that involves not just one locality or group of believers but the universal Body of Christ.

We commend the materials in this booklet to all the saints for their sober and prayerful reading and learning. May we all be

preserved in the genuine oneness for the Lord's move in His recovery today.

For further information concerning the deviant teachings, aberrant practices, and divisive work of Brother Dong Yu Lan and his co-workers, see [www.afaithfulwitness.org/portuguese/](http://www.afaithfulwitness.org/portuguese/).



## LETTER OF FELLOWSHIP AND WARNING

April 4, 2009

From: The co-workers in the Lord's recovery

To: The saints and churches in the Lord's recovery

Concerning: The deviations in teaching and practice of Dong Yu Lan and his co-workers who promote his divisive work

We are writing this letter to the saints and the churches throughout the Lord's recovery because of the widespread proliferation of a serious problem caused by the work and ministry of Brother Dong Yu Lan and his co-workers who promote his deviant teachings, aberrant practices, and divisive work. In June 2005 twenty-one co-workers in the Lord's recovery, representing all the co-workers from Africa, Asia, Australasia, Europe, and North America, wrote a letter to Brother Dong to express concerns regarding his serious errors in teaching and practice and the problems those errors were causing in the recovery (see attached letter). Despite repeated attempts to address these problems with Brother Dong and his co-workers, it is now evident that they have no intention of changing their course but instead are becoming more and more aggressive in propagating their erroneous and divisive teachings and spreading their divisive work.

In recent months public statements have been issued by co-workers and leading brothers serving in Mexico, Spain, Central America, the Caribbean, Canada, Colombia, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland warning the saints in those places concerning the work of Dong Yu Lan. We agree with what is written in these letters, and we agree with the brothers' burden in issuing them. These warnings should be heeded by all of the churches throughout the Lord's recovery in the principle of being one

Body. We have also received many reports from other countries of problems caused by Brother Dong's work and ministry. Because Brother Dong and his co-workers are aggressively propagating their erroneous teachings and spreading their work apart from and in rivalry with the Lord's present recovery as raised up by the New Testament ministry brought to us by Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, we are burdened to issue this letter of fellowship and warning to all the churches and the saints.

We ask all the leading ones and saints to read this letter carefully with much prayer and much intercession. We particularly ask the leading ones in places where these teachings and practices are spreading to warn the saints against these errors and to inoculate them with the unique New Testament teaching of the apostles. To any saints who may receive this letter and have been influenced by these teachings and practices, in love we urge you to soberly read and pray over the contents of this letter.

*“Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things.” (1 Tim. 1:3)*

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

*“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)*

*“A factious man, after a first and second admonition, refuse.” (Titus 3:10)*

### **Background Leading to Deviation and Division**

Brother Witness Lee initiated the work of the Lord's recovery in South America, including Brazil. In 1958 and 1959 he charged the saints in Taiwan to migrate to the West for the spread of the Lord's recovery. Some saints responded to Brother Lee's

fellowship by migrating to Brazil for the Lord's move in those years. Brother Dong Yu Lan also moved there as a businessman in 1960. When Brother Lee visited Brazil in 1965, Brother Dong was serving with other brothers in the leadership of the church in Sao Paulo, which at that time consisted entirely of Chinese-speaking saints. Brother Lee told them that the church must bring in the local people. According to Brother Dong's published testimony, "In those years, however, we were unable to bring in local people," so beginning in 1970 "the Lord sent Brother Chang Wu-Chen to Brazil, thus opening the door to the local people" (Dong Yu Lan's testimony as recorded in *History and Testimony* by Witness Lee, translated from Chinese, p. 272). Brother Chang Wu-Chen visited Brazil often, and Brother Samuel Cheng (鄭寶之—Cheng Pao-Chih) was sent by Brother Witness Lee to live and work there. The two of them gave many conferences in those years. In 1977 Brother Dong began speaking in conferences as well.

Before 1985 the spreading of the Lord's recovery in South America was carried out through the propagation of the printed ministry of Brother Nee and Brother Lee, particularly the *Life-study of Genesis* and the *Life-study of Exodus*. When Brother Lee visited Brazil in 1984, he was favorably impressed by the saints' use of the Life-studies. This matched the crucial practice in the recovery of all the churches on the earth participating in the common fellowship of the Body of Christ, enjoying the ministry of the age, and carrying out the Lord's move in one accord. Such a practice would properly represent the Body of Christ and open the door for God's manifested blessing. To the degree that the churches, the ministry, and the work in South America were one with the Lord's recovery, they were kept at that time in a healthy condition and enjoyed growth and increase. We acknowledge, as Brother Lee did, the contribution that Brother Dong and others made in the spread of the gospel in the early years of the Lord's recovery in South America. However, since that time Brother Dong's work has increasingly deviated in both teaching and practice from what Brother Lee commended in 1984.

Brother Dong and his co-workers claim that he was the source of the work in South America. This is simply not accurate. The work in South America preceded him, and the churches in many parts of South America were not produced by his work. In fact, in 1991 Brother Lee strongly charged him not to give others the impression that he was the “overseer” of the churches in Brazil and Argentina. However, Brother Dong and his co-workers increasingly asserted his authority as “the apostle” and even the “Father” of the churches in South America.

For many years Brother Dong and his co-workers have claimed that Brother Lee repeatedly told Brother Dong not to invite the co-workers from outside South America to minister to the saints and churches there. They have used this claim to isolate the churches and the saints in South America from the general ministry and fellowship in the Lord’s recovery. It is clear from Brother Lee’s spoken and published ministry that those claims do not represent Brother Lee’s express leading regarding South America. Many published statements from the 1960s until his departure in 1997 show Brother Lee’s desire for the free and full circulation in the fellowship of the Body, including visits by the co-workers to the churches in the Lord’s recovery throughout the earth. From 1985 through 1995 in particular, Brother Lee repeatedly spoke of the need for the co-workers and saints to take the ministry to South America. Many of these exhortations are in his books. Two examples are as follows:

All of Central and South America have opened to the truth, especially to the truth among us. Even if we were to send two hundred full-time workers to Central and South America, that would not be enough. Everywhere there is a reverberating cry for the truth. (*Speaking for God*, spoken in 1985, p. 19)

In the region of Central America and the Caribbean, including Puerto Rico, Belize, etc., and South America, the door is open everywhere and there is the need for people to go. (*A General Outline of God’s Economy and the Proper Living of a God-Man*, spoken in 1994, p. 64)

Many more examples could be given. Contrary to Brother Lee’s fellowship, Brother Dong and his co-workers have hindered

many churches in South America from receiving the co-workers and from participating in the common fellowship of the churches in the Lord's recovery. Instead, they have made those churches a private domain of their work and ministry. Such private work and closed fellowship, being contrary to the principles of the Body of Christ, always result in discord and division.

In such a state of isolation, the work centered in Brazil under Dong Yu Lan has increasingly deviated in both truth and practice. As early as 1985 Brother Dong began to reinterpret and alter the ministry in the Lord's recovery, publishing his own speaking instead of simply feeding the saints with the New Testament ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. To justify his actions, he claimed that the people of South America needed him to "digest" Brother Lee's ministry and then to present it to them in a simplified form in order that they could understand. Thus, the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee was subtly replaced by the speaking and publications of Dong Yu Lan as the primary diet in most of the churches in Brazil and in other countries and continents to which his work spread. Brother Dong used Editora Árvore da Vida, which was set up to translate and publish the writings of Brother Nee and Brother Lee, to propagate his own divergent views.

Over the years, Brother Lee personally warned Brother Dong concerning his different speaking, his publication work, his unscriptural visions and revelations, his work of regional isolationism, and his exercise of dominating control over the churches in South America. For example, in 1991 Brother Lee was forced to address problems concerning the abuse of authority, regionalism, and unprincipled publication work with Brother Dong personally and in the presence of co-workers, as well as other brothers from Brazil. In the mid-1990s Brother Lee told Brother Dong in the presence of some of the co-workers that he would not go to Brazil, because to do so would be to build up Brother Dong's work. Rather than receiving Brother Lee's rebuke and corrective fellowship, Brother Dong and his

co-workers continued in their errors. In 2005 Brother Francis Ball recounted to a group of co-workers, with four of Brother Dong's closest co-workers present, that Brother Lee had directly said to Brother Dong, "Brother Dong, you are not doing in South America what I am doing."

Since Brother Lee's departure in 1997, Brother Dong's teachings and practices have become decidedly more deviant and divisive. In spite of repeated admonitions by many co-workers in the Lord's recovery, both in writing and in person, Brother Dong and his co-workers have been unrelenting in the propagation of their teachings and practices. It was because of increasing problems caused by Brother Dong's work that twenty-one co-workers sent a personal letter in June 2005 to Brother Dong on behalf of all the co-workers to express their grave concerns regarding his teaching and work. Rejecting rather than receiving the brothers' fellowship, Brother Dong misrepresented the tone and content of the letter in his public speaking and suggested that the co-workers had blasphemed the Holy Spirit by writing it. In recent years Brother Dong and his co-workers have intensified their assertions of authority. They have also made numerous public statements and taken many actions in the work in rivalry with and even in opposition to the churches, the ministry, and the work of the Lord's recovery. In 1984 Brother Lee spoke positively of the Brazilian saints' appetite for his ministry and the increase to the churches that it produced. Brother Dong and his co-workers have repeatedly miscast this speaking as an endorsement of Brother Dong's current deviations in teaching and work.

Dong Yu Lan's teaching has deviated to the point of directly violating some of the most basic principles of the foundational faith of all Christians, including the divine inspiration of the writers of the New Testament. In addition, his teaching contains serious errors concerning the place of the apostles' ministry and teaching, the oneness of the Body of Christ, the one work to build up the Body, and the proper standing of the local churches.

## Different Teachings of Dong Yu Lan and His Co-workers

Throughout the centuries, the advancement of the Lord's recovery has always been based upon the truth. Our experience of the Spirit and the divine life is firmly founded on the proper apprehension of the truth. In our practice of the church life in the Lord's recovery, we must be absolute for the truth and uphold the absoluteness of the truth, as taught by the apostles Paul and John (2 Tim. 2:15; 3 John 3-4, 8). We should take the way of the truth and not compromise the truth in any way (2 Pet. 2:2), knowing that the truth safeguards us from error. Any teaching that depreciates the truth is dangerous, and we should not accept it.

Someone has even said that we should care only for the Spirit, not for principles. How subtle! Anyone who knows the truth realizes that this means to accept only the Spirit and to reject the Bible, for all the principles are derived from the Bible. It is very dangerous to have only the Spirit, but not the principles of the Word. (*Truth Messages*, p. 12)

Furthermore, the leadership in the New Testament is actually the controlling vision of the truth concerning God's eternal economy.

The leadership in the New Testament ministry in actuality is not the leadership of one controlling person. In the Lord's recovery we reject the notion of one person controlling persons and matters. We do have some leadership, but not the leadership of one controlling person.... The leadership is not the leadership of any single person who is controlling people in the Lord's recovery. The leadership in the Lord's recovery is the leadership of the God-given revelation that restricts us, directs us, and controls us so that confusion and division can be avoided. (*The God-ordained Way to Practice the New Testament Economy*, p. 172)

Undermining the inspiration and authority of New Testament writers: In his International Conference at Estancia Árvore da Vida in February 2005, Brother Dong said that when Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote their Gospels, "they were not in the Spirit." In their June 2005 letter, the twenty-one co-workers

strongly admonished Dong Yu Lan regarding this speaking, pointing out that such speaking casts serious doubt on the divine authority, and even the divine inspiration, of the first three New Testament Gospels. The co-workers wrote in their letter, “It has long been our testimony in the Lord’s recovery that the entire Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, as the Scripture itself affirms. It is simply against Christian truth to say that Matthew, Mark and Luke were not in the Spirit. We all must reject and condemn such speaking among us.”

In spite of the co-workers’ admonition, Brother Dong has continued to speak in a way that depreciates large portions of the New Testament and undermines the authority of the New Testament writers. For example, in 2006 he said that “all of the twelve apostles” applied the training they had received from the Lord “according to what was most beneficial to them, while neglecting the inward life and Spirit.” In 2007 he referred to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke as “traditional and judicial.” In 2007 he also repeatedly demeaned the ministries of Peter and Paul, saying that Peter’s ministry was “traditional” and Paul’s ministry was “judicial.” While Brother Lee used the word “judicial” to refer to redemption as the procedure that qualifies and positions the believers to enjoy God’s organic salvation, Brother Dong uses “judicial” to mean “doctrinal,” “legal,” and “in letters.” Because Paul’s ministry was judicial, according to Brother Dong, it brought people into the mind to argue over the truth. In his fall 2007 International Conference at Estancia Dong Yu Lan said,

What God commissioned him [Paul] with was His New Testament, but he wrote it down in his epistles in a judicial way and sent it to the churches. He failed to figure out a way to practice it in the church. Therefore, he lost his commission from God, and God let him go. Later he was killed by the Roman prince, by the Roman army. We can say that his judicial ministry was terminated right then.

Brother Dong’s evaluation of Paul’s Epistles contradicts Peter’s word in his Epistle, in which he commended Paul’s writings,

saying that “all his letters” should be regarded like “the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Pet. 3:15-16).

Replacing the “judicial” ministry of Brothers Nee and Lee: Brother Dong teaches that God allowed Peter and Paul to be killed in order to terminate their “traditional” and “judicial” ministries, respectively. Further, he teaches that the ministry of the apostle John was “organic,” and only this “organic” ministry can continue to the end of this age. Brother Dong claims that today only he and his co-workers are carrying out John’s “organic” ministry of Spirit and life. Dong Yu Lan’s denigration of the apostles’ teaching and ministry is used to justify his own displacement of the New Testament ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee and to assert his overriding authority and the supremacy of his own teaching. He and his co-workers assert that Watchman Nee’s ministry was “judicial”; Witness Lee’s “judicial” ministry, like the “judicial” ministry of Paul, has “passed away”; the “old messages” in the recovery are “doctrine”; and the saints in the “judicial” recovery are in the mind and do not deny their soul because they study the truth. Based on points such as these, Dong Yu Lan and his co-workers maintain that Brother Nee’s and Brother Lee’s messages are no longer applicable today and that what Brother Dong teaches is “the present truth.”

Defending and exalting the “organic” recovery of Brother Dong: Brother Dong and his co-workers claim that he and the churches in Brazil have left the “judicial recovery” and have become the “organic recovery,” which is “the last recovery.” He claims that only South America will carry out God’s commission while the rest of the recovery remains in the “judicial” realm. Brother Dong says that he has gone higher and further than Brother Nee and Brother Lee and that his ministry is the unique continuation of the “organic” ministry of John.

Propagating strange “visions” and teachings: Brother Dong and his co-workers propagate strange teachings that are not part of the divine revelation in the Holy Bible. For example, he teaches, with no biblical or historical evidence, that the apostle John found Paul’s fourteen Epistles while he was in Ephesus. He

asserts that Paul's teaching in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9-10) made studying the truth "a substitute for a living touch with the Lord's name and the Word." The young people in South America were taught that "the way that Paul took to help the churches in Asia, teaching daily in the school of Tyrannus for two years, was not adequate. For this reason in his last epistle he records the result of that way: all those in Asia abandoned him." This kind of teaching causes people to despise the study of the truth. One of Brother Dong's co-workers taught that believers are misled by the Bible's "apparent praise" of the Bereans in Acts 17. In fact, he contended that the Bereans lost God's blessing because they "examined the Scriptures daily" to see if the things Paul was teaching were so. This contradicts the clear word of Acts 17:11-12. Such teachings undermine the authority of the Scripture and encourage uncritical acceptance of deviant teachings that are without scriptural basis.

Brother Dong claims to have received a "vision of Revelation 12" based on the shape of the continents on a world map. This "vision" has been widely promoted by Brother Dong and his co-workers. Its effect is to exalt the role of Brother Dong's work. For example, Brother Dong's interpretation of Revelation 12 gives South America a central role in God's move both now and in the end times. He teaches that South America will be the "wilderness" where God's people will find refuge during the great tribulation. Based on the world map, Brother Dong teaches that the shape of the combined continents of Europe and Asia resemble a dragon, and that the outline of Africa resembles a fetus, which he claims indicates that Africa has a particular relationship to the producing of the man-child in Revelation 12. Based on this he claims that South America has a special commission to spread Brother Dong's teaching and work to Africa. On maps created to depict this teaching, South America is portrayed as a cluster of grapes, the emblem of Brother Dong's publishing enterprise, indicating that his ministry will be the source of food for the entire earth. In November 2007, in a conference in Boston, Brother Ron Kangas publicly besought Brother Dong and his co-workers to stop teaching this, saying:

Finally, I would appeal in love with an aching heart to those who are responsible for actively propagating this teaching: “Please stop. For the benefit of the Lord’s recovery and of all the churches with the dear saints, stop.” In particular, I appeal to the one who showed this [caricature of the world map] to Brother Lee, and to whom Brother Lee charged, saying, “Do not show this to anyone.” (*Ministry Magazine*, vol. 12, no. 3, March 2008, p. 163)

Brother Dong ignored Brother Ron’s charge, re-speaking and expanding upon his “vision” in a conference in Lima, Peru, just seven weeks later. In that speaking Dong Yu Lan said:

The Bible tells us that the dragon was mad at the universal woman and was therefore trying to put her to death. First, it caused the water in the Mediterranean Sea to overflow and flood the coastal region. Because of this, the woman, signifying the churches, died. Thank the Lord, the Bible also tells us that there was an opening. God made an opening at the Strait of Gibraltar, so that the water was drained into the ocean. The Mediterranean Sea could never be filled, because there was the opening of the Strait of Gibraltar. When the dragon saw that the woman was not dead, it continued seeking to kill her.

One common theme in Brother Dong’s speaking is to uplift his own work and the churches under his work. He claims that only the churches in Brazil have advanced to the “organic” stage and that “God has revealed to the churches in South America His highest purpose...because He knows that only the churches in Brazil will put His word into practice.” In his fall 2006 International Conference at Estancia Árvore da Vida, he declared, “Thank the Lord that He has preserved seven thousand that didn’t bend the knees to Baal. Hallelujah! Hallelujah for us in South America.” Brother Dong uses his “vision” and his strange interpretations to justify the global spread of his teaching and work in complete independence from the one work and one fellowship in the Lord’s recovery throughout the earth.

Expanding his presumptuous claim to the authority of apostleship from Brazil to the entire earth: Over time Brother Dong’s claims concerning the scope of his assumed mandate have

expanded from Brazil, to South America, to the Spanish language countries, to all the Latin languages, and today to all the earth. He has often maintained that Brother Lee gave him the work in South America, but that is not true, as many of us can personally bear witness. Neither did Brother Lee “give” him the work in Brazil. To have done so would have been against the biblical principles that Brother Lee taught and practiced concerning the Lord’s work. While Brother Lee asked various brothers to labor in particular geographical areas, he never gave parts of the earth to them as territories, and he always taught that all the co-workers in the Lord’s recovery should labor together in fellowship and coordination for the one work of the Lord’s recovery.

Another hidden divisive factor is the tendency to keep separate territories. The Lord's work and move for the accomplishment of God's eternal economy is uniquely one. If we consider any region in which we are participating in the Lord's unique work as our particular territory, this will be a cause or a factor of division. (*Elders' Training, Book 10: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way (2)*, p. 19)

In an elders’ meeting on July 6, 1991, in which Brother Dong was present, Brother Lee said:

I am concerned that in the Lord's recovery, the brothers in a certain country may consider that the work there is their work. Then some brothers in another country may consider that the work there is their work.... There is a practical situation that is abnormal, and the biggest point of this abnormality is the different works. (*Further Consideration of the Eldership, the Region of Work, and the Care for the Body of Christ*, p. 19)

The next day, in a meeting with Brother Dong and others to address problems in South America, Brother Lee said:

According to the truth, the Body of Christ is one. We must preserve the oneness of the Body. This is Ephesians 4:2-4. You must keep the oneness of the Spirit: one Body and one Spirit. To keep the oneness of the Spirit is to keep the oneness of the Body. Obviously, to have so many sub-regions does not keep the oneness.

In that same talk Brother Lee blamed Brother Dong for being the cause of discord in South America and said directly to him:

Do not give people an impression that you are the overseer of the churches in Brazil and Argentina and that they have to ask your permission in everything.

After Brother Lee's passing, Dong Yu Lan proposed to two co-workers from different parts of the earth that they divide the earth into three regions of work, with the work in all the Latin language countries being recognized as his. There is no precedent in the Bible or in the history of the Lord's recovery for such a divisive proposal. It disregards the principles of one Body, one ministry, and one work to carry out the unique divine economy. After his proposal was rejected, Brother Dong expanded the scope of his claimed commission even further. Today he is actively exporting his work throughout Africa, Europe, Japan, North America, and South America.

False teachings to justify the practice of division: Brother Dong has advanced distorted interpretations of the Bible to justify his work's divisive practices. For example, Brother Dong and his co-workers allege that only those saints and churches that follow him, his teaching, and his "orientations" (i.e., directives given by Brother Dong) are "Philadelphia." Those who do not do so have left the position of "Philadelphia" and have become "Laodicea." Furthermore, they teach that those in "Philadelphia" should not have contact with those in "Laodicea." This teaching has been used to sanction a different and rival work that has produced a separate circle of fellowship among saints and churches on at least four continents, the expulsion of saints from churches, and the establishment of separate, second "table meetings" in many cities where local churches already exist. Brother Dong and his co-workers have also made false accusations against individuals and churches publicly, in writing, and in private talks in order to undermine the saints' trust in and draw them away from the existing churches and leading ones.

Criticism of the co-workers, the work, and the ministry in the Lord's recovery: Brother Dong and his co-workers vindicate the superiority of his ministry by spreading many false and evil

reports. His co-workers complain that their attempts at fellowship have been frustrated since 1994, at which time Brother Lee was still with us and ministering. In fact, numerous attempts have been made to fellowship with them both before Brother Lee's passing and in the years since then. Rather than practicing oneness with the co-workers, Brother Dong and his co-workers have spoken against them in the most disdainful terms and have spread unfounded and false accusations to their fellow workers and leading ones in the churches both in their speaking and by email.

Brother Dong and his co-workers have made numerous false and evil accusations against Living Stream Ministry, the *Recovery Version*, *The Holy Word for Morning Revival*, the international conferences and trainings, the full-time trainings, the publication work in the Lord's recovery, and individual elders and co-workers. Those things which they oppose, however, were initiated under the leading of Brother Lee and have become a source of rich blessing throughout the recovery today.

Many other strange and deviant teachings have sprung from the errors and biased views listed above. For example, Brother Dong and his co-workers have promoted shaking, jumping, dancing, making "trains," and "tap dancing" as practices needed to be delivered from the self. He teaches that "anyone who is filled with the Spirit must have jumped," and, "If you have not jumped, you have not been filled with the Spirit." He justifies such activities saying, "The Holy Spirit has led us to have something new."

### **Practices of Dong Yu Lan and His Work Today:**

Dong Yu Lan has built up a personal following based on hierarchy and claims of personal authority: The exercise of authority in Brother Dong's work is in stark contrast to the biblical revelation concerning leadership and our practice in the Lord's recovery. Leadership in the New Testament is not vested in persons as their possession, but in the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42; Titus 1:9). Thus, in the Lord's recovery, the co-workers do not cultivate any personal following. Instead of

following persons in an official or organizational way, we follow the healthy teaching of God's eternal economy ministered to us by the Lord's servants (1 Tim. 1:4; 6:3). According to the revelation in the Bible, no one other than Christ Himself has any personal authority (Matt. 28:18), and He alone is the Head of the Body (Eph. 4:15; Col. 1:18). The church shares in the authority of the ascended Christ through His divine transmission (Eph. 1:19-23). This authority is carried out in the mutual supply of life among the members of the Body (Eph. 4:15b-16). In all three aspects of the Body—the church, the ministry, and the work—there is no organization or hierarchy; there is only the mutual dispensing in the fellowship of the divine life.

The practice of Brother Dong and his co-workers violates these principles. They have taught a hierarchy of authority consisting of first God, then Christ, then “the apostle,” and finally the elders. They have vested near absolute authority in “the apostle,” Dong Yu Lan. They have taught that “if you go against Brother Dong, you are going against God.” They have established a hierarchy of workers and elders to carry out the “orientations” (i.e., directives) of “the apostle.” Brothers are assigned as “national co-workers” and “regional co-workers.” Among the elders, one may be designated in a locality as “the first elder.” Such arrangements are organizational and hierarchical and are contrary to the organic nature of the Body of Christ. At every level of the hierarchy in Brother Dong's work, those bearing responsibility are expected to follow the directives of those above them, or they risk being put out. Many workers and elders have been dismissed for not being “one with the apostle.”

Dong Yu Lan and his co-workers have stressed unconditional obedience to his authority and have sought to intimidate any who would criticize their work. On the one hand, they have taught that as long as you follow Brother Dong's orientations, right or wrong, you bear no responsibility before God for the outcome. This teaching subverts the consciences of the saints and desensitizes them to wholesale deviations from the truth.

On the other hand, Brother Dong and his co-workers have repeatedly said that those who express concerns about their teaching and work are at risk of committing the unforgivable sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. To instill fear in others, they have used tragedies that befell certain saints or their families as examples of God's judgment on those who are not one with Brother Dong. When some saints have turned away from Brother Dong's ministry, they have had curses pronounced against them by Brother Dong's co-workers and followers. Others have been subjected to vicious attacks concerning personal failures that were either fabricated by their accusers or dealt with many years ago, without concern for the damage caused to the accused ones or their families. We repudiate all such abusive, self-serving, and reprehensible speaking.

Dong Yu Lan and his co-workers carry out a secretive, deceptive, and independent work: Without fellowship with the leading ones or the co-workers, Brother Dong and his co-workers have traveled within North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Japan to contact saints in the local churches privately in order to entice them to follow Brother Dong's ministry. They have cultivated private relationships between their work and individual saints and churches and have scheduled their own conferences and gatherings in conflict with scheduled conferences in the recovery in North America, South America, and Europe, so that they could maintain a separation between the saints following Brother Dong's ministry and the general fellowship among the churches in the Lord's recovery.

In many places they have secretly spread Brother Dong's publications in spite of direct requests from the brothers bearing responsibility in the churches that they not do so. Places in the United States where this has happened include Illinois, Maryland, Virginia, New England, and Florida. Brother Dong and his co-workers have similarly attempted to spread their deviant teachings through his literature in other parts of North America, as well as Africa, Europe, Japan, and South America. Recently Brother Dong and his co-workers called for many more young people to serve as "colporteurs" (traveling book sellers) to spread his teachings throughout the earth.

Dong Yu Lan and his co-workers practice division: The ultimate issue of Brother Dong's work is division. In over thirty cities in twelve countries on four continents Brother Dong and his co-workers have established their own "churches" and "table meetings" in cities where properly standing local churches already exist. On this basis alone, the work of Brother Dong and his co-workers must be repudiated by all who care for the Lord's interest in His recovery. This practice violates the fundamental New Testament principle of the ground of oneness which both Brother Nee and Brother Lee taught as foundational truths in the practice of the Lord's recovery:

Setting up churches according to our own wishes is the greatest sin. We must fear founding a church more than anything else. Brothers, do we see the seriousness of this matter? Nothing is worse than setting up a church at will. We can found anything, but we must never establish a church in this manner because this involves the problem of the Body of Christ. We must be clear about this matter before God. 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, pp. 379-380)

If I am in a certain city, regardless of how I feel about those who are meeting there as the unique local church and regardless of how they treat me, I have no choice. I have to learn the lesson of the cross. I must learn the lesson of brokenness and self-denial. I have no ground, no right, and no standing to start another church in that locality as long as a unique one is there already. I must be restricted and limited. This is the real lesson. (*The Practical Expression of the Church*, p. 30)

In some localities where there are established local churches, Brother Dong's co-workers have gathered saints to meet separately from the church. In other cases they have established "churches" in localities nearby existing churches—using the city

limits as an excuse for division—and then recruited saints from those churches to join them. Both of these practices are contrary to the truth of the ground of oneness. Meetings set up for the purpose of establishing an isolated and separate fellowship are a division.

The one Body comes out of the one God, the one incarnation, the one Christ in His incarnation, the one crucifixion, the one resurrection, and the one Christ in His ascension. If we have seen this, do we dare to divide this Body, to create any division in this Body? Certainly not. Yet today some who were with us have dared to create division. A brother told one dissenting one that we cannot tolerate division. This dissenting one, who had created a division in Anaheim, then said that he would either dissolve that division or remove it out of Anaheim. When I heard this I said to myself, "If you could move that division even to Mars, it would still be a division." Division is division. Eventually, that division was moved out of Anaheim into a nearby city where a church had already been established. This incident shows how much the dissenting ones are in darkness concerning the Body of Christ. (*One Body and One Spirit*, p. 15)

In some cases Brother Dong's co-workers have fostered such divisions by sowing ethnic and cultural mistrust. Such sowing of suspicion among brothers is evil (Prov. 6:16, 19). Any appeal to ethnic, language, cultural, or national backgrounds as bases for establishing separate circles of fellowship is foreign to the very nature of the Body of Christ as the one new man created by Christ on the cross through His death (Eph. 2:15; Col. 3:10-11).

In places where Brother Dong's work has spread, the standing of the churches and the saints is measured by their oneness with his person, his teachings, and his "orientations." According to Brother Dong and his co-workers, for a church or a saint to reject Dong Yu Lan's orientation is tantamount to the church having lost its standing or to that saint having lost his or her standing to meet. In cases where the leading ones in churches have decided not to follow Brother Dong's work or ministry any longer, some among Brother Dong's co-workers have met this challenge to their dominion by going into those localities,

overturning the leadership, and replacing the leading brothers with others whose sole qualification may be their loyalty to Brother Dong. Thus, Brother Dong and his co-workers have supplanted the truth of the ground of the church and have undermined the local administration of the churches, replacing the biblical standard with allegiance to Brother Dong's personal ministry and work as the governing factor in acknowledging a church.

For example, when the responsible brothers in one place opened their church to ministry from brothers outside the sphere of Brother Dong's work, three of Brother Dong's close co-workers, acting in his name, wrote, "Brother Dong annuls the action that these brothers made in the name of the church," declaring that only those who followed Brother Dong "remain firm on the ground of the church." In both Ecuador and Chile, it was taught that those who left Dong Yu Lan's "orientation" were in rebellion and therefore had lost the ground of the church. In other cases, a new "church" has been established in a locality where there is an existing church on the sole basis of maintaining "fellowship with the apostle." There are many cases of saints being expelled from churches and/or being severely persecuted because of their desire to follow the New Testament ministry brought to us by Brother Watchman Nee and Brother Witness Lee in the publications of Living Stream Ministry. These practices are abusive and divisive and have no place among the churches in the Lord's recovery.

### **Conclusion**

The facts addressed in this letter are based on extensive research. The examples given of errant teachings of Dong Yu Lan and his co-workers are drawn from their own speaking and writings. The incidents of problems caused by their work are well-documented. For further information, see the website [www.afaithfulwitness.org](http://www.afaithfulwitness.org). Those who have questions about this and other warning statements are directed to that site.

We want to state clearly that the views and actions of Brother Dong Yu Lan and his co-workers as described in this letter do

not represent those of the New Testament ministry brought to us through our brothers Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. Neither do they represent the practice of the leadership in the Lord's recovery from the 1920s through today. We disagree with and condemn all teachings of error and work of division done in the name of the Lord's recovery.

If a person in a role of responsibility deviates from the truth, no matter who he is, the saints should not follow him, even if they have received help from him in the past. In order to be absolute to the truth and faithful to the Lord's recovery, we all must set aside personal feelings and relationships (Matt. 12:48-50; 1 Pet. 1:22).

Regardless of how much help we have received from a certain one in the past, if he does something that offends the Body, we must practice the truth [referring to the truth in Romans 16:17]. (*The Problems Causing the Turmoils in the Church Life*, p. 32)

Being absolute to the truth means that no personal feelings or family relationships are allowed to stand in the way of the truth. In spiritual matters, the truth is compromised as soon as human relationships are taken into account. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 52: *The Character of the Lord's Worker*, p. 152)

It is our genuine desire and prayer that, through the compassions of our Savior God, Brother Dong and his co-workers would change their course. We declare our openness to restore into fellowship any who genuinely depart from their deviation.

It is our earnest desire that the saints and churches in the Lord's recovery may be preserved from any further damages and be kept in peace for their building up (Acts 9:31). We ask all the saints to continue in prayers and intercessions to this end. To any who come in contact with the teachings, publications, or practices promoted by Brother Dong and his co-workers, we caution you to refuse them so you may be safeguarded and the Body may be spared from the confusion, damage, and division that will inevitably result when teachings contrary to God's

economy are allowed to take root and grow. To those who are following such teachings and practices, we admonish you in the love of Christ to turn away from these things.

We encourage the saints to be at peace and be strengthened by the Lord's continued speaking in His recovery. As never before His testimony is shining and His move is spreading throughout the earth. May the Lord preserve all of the saints and churches in the genuine oneness and one accord (John 17:11, 21-23; Eph. 4:3-6; Rom. 15:5-6), granting us to think the same thing (Phil. 2:2) and speak the same thing (1 Cor. 1:10) so that together we may carry out the unique work of the New Testament ministry for the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12).

On behalf of the co-workers in the Lord's recovery:

#### UNITED STATES



Bill Barker



Benjamin Chen



Minoru Chen



Les Cites



Tom Goetz



Ray Graver



Dennis Higashi



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*Benson Phillips*  
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James Reetzke, Sr.

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*Simpson Chen*  
Simpson Chen

*Ezra Chou*  
Ezra Chou

*Abraham Hsu*  
Abraham Hsu

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Guey-Sen Hwong

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Livingstone Lee

*Philemon Lee*  
Philemon Lee

*Horng Lin*  
Horng Lin

*Newman Lin*  
Newman Lin

*Suey Liu*  
Suey Liu

*Titus Lin*  
Titus Lin

*Caleb Ou Yang*  
Caleb Ou Yang

*Yuan Hsiang Wang*  
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*Joseph Wu*  
Joseph Wu

*Paul Wu*  
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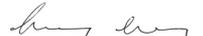
  
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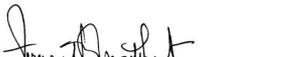
  
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Francisco de Aquino Ribeiro

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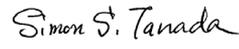
  
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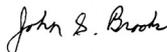
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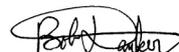
  
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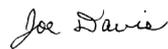
  
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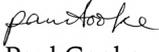
  
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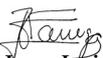
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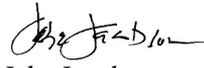
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A LETTER OF FELLOWSHIP  
FROM 21 CO-WORKERS TO BROTHER DONG YU LAN

June 4, 2005

Brother Dong Yu Lan  
Rua Artur de Azevedo 1537 – Apt. 91  
Pinheiros-São Paulo-SP  
Brasil CEP 05404-004

Dear Brother Dong Yu Lan,

We are writing with heavy hearts to fellowship with you out of our utmost concern for the Body of Christ and particularly for the testimony of the Body in the Lord's recovery. Through the ministry of this age that we follow we have all been enlightened to see from the New Testament that what God wants to do in this age is to build up the church as the Body of Christ in oneness to be the bride of Christ so that He may receive her to Himself when He returns. This bride is the household of God, the new man, and the kingdom of God. It is universal and composed of the regenerated and overcoming saints from all nations, races, and languages; in this universal new man Christ is all and in all. The history of the church in the last twenty centuries makes clear, according to the Word of God, that God has come to the final point in His move on this earth. 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.

Of course, we cannot say that Christianity has not done many things for the Lord, but nearly all of its work has resulted in division and a loss of the testimony of the one Body of Christ. Christianity has certainly preached the gospel, yet the way of that work of preaching the gospel has often cut the Body of

Christ into pieces (cf. Phil. 1:15). A similar result has occurred in almost every aspect of Christianity's work: its spreading on the earth has been a spreading of denominations and divisions, its edifying of the believers has been a building up of practices that divide the believers from one another, and even its expounding of the Bible has been a promoting of winds of teaching that toss the believers about rather than building them up into one Body. The chief characteristic of Christianity, even to the unenlightened world that beholds it, is dissension, discord, confusion, and division. One cannot say that simply because Christianity handles the divine treasures—the gospel, the truth of the Bible, and the divine life—it does proper work for the Lord. As the woman spoken of in Matthew 13:33, she has shown herself quite capable of introducing leaven and leavening the whole lump (cf. 1 Cor. 5:6). The Lord's recovery is the recovery of the building up of the Body of Christ; it is not simply a work of preaching the gospel, edifying the saints, or teaching the Bible. Though we do these things, the chief characteristic of the Lord's recovery today is oneness, the oneness of the Body of Christ as the oneness of the Triune God Himself, and what we do in the Lord's recovery today we do only in a way that preserves and strengthens that divine oneness, which we are privileged to participate in. If we do not take care of this chief characteristic, our work will not differ at all from that of Christianity and will not count as God's work in this age. What a terrible thing and great loss and shame it will be if the Lord declares at His coming to any of us who are His co-workers in His recovery today, "I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness" (Matt. 7:13-27). May the Lord save us all!

In our fellowship with you, we would like to quote a few lines from Brother Watchman Nee's and Brother Witness Lee's written ministry concerning the Body of Christ. These quotations were part of the outlines in the recent Elders and Responsible Ones' Training (Spring 2005). These words are a great help to all of us and since you were not able to join us for the time, we would like to present them to you. May we all pray

over them and work according to them. They embody the controlling vision among us and are as follows:

1. Because God's eternal economy is to obtain the Body of Christ, we need to have a vision of the Body and do the work of the Lord's recovery under this governing and controlling vision—Eph. 3:3-11; Prov. 29:18a.
2. Our work is the work of the Lord's recovery for the building up of the Body of Christ; this work is according to the heavenly vision of the crystallized significance of the Body of Christ—Acts 26:19; 9:1-6.
3. What we are doing today is not our personal work but the work of the economy of God—the building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 3:9; 4:16.
4. Our work in the Lord's recovery is the work of God's economy, the work of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 15:58; 16:10; Col. 4:11.
5. All the co-workers should do the same one work universally for the unique Body; the starting point of the work is the oneness of the Body—1 Cor. 16:10.
6. Whenever God's children see the oneness of the Body, they will also see the oneness of the work, and they will be delivered out of individualistic work into the work of the Body.
7. What we have in the Lord's recovery is not one man's individual ministry but a corporate ministry of the Body—Eph.4:11-13.
8. In the recovery we should not have the thought that we can do a particular work according to our way; rather, we need to realize that in the Lord's recovery there is only one work—the work of the Body—Col. 2:19.
9. In the Lord's move in His recovery, there should be only one work, not different works.
10. According to the picture in Song of Songs 7:11, Christ's lover wants to carry out with her Beloved the work that is for the entire world (fields) by sojourning from one place to another (lodging in the villages).
11. The church, the ministry, and the work derive their existence from, find their place in, and work for the good of the Body—Rom. 12:4-5; Col. 2:19; 3:15.

12. The work of the Triune God in us is to produce the Body of Christ; any work outside of this is not on the central lane of God's eternal economy—Eph. 4:4-6.
13. In the Lord's recovery, we should all have one heart and one way in the one accord to speak the same thing with one mouth in the one new man for the one work of the one ministry to build up the one Body—Jer. 32:39.
14. All the problems in the church today are due to the lack of seeing the Body and to the ignorance concerning the Body.
15. When we touch the spiritual work of God, we must be restricted by His laws; if we deviate from His laws, we are finished—cf. Num. 18:1.
16. The leadership in the New Testament ministry is the leadership of the controlling, God-given revelation of God's economy—Acts 26:19.

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. The publication of the ministry of the age is the trumpeting of the leadership in the Lord's move on the earth, and if there are multiple publications by different ministers, there will be an uncertain sounding of the trumpet and a definite danger of multiple leaderships among us. This will no doubt result in confusion, contention, and ultimately, division. Such an uncertain trumpeting will bring the divisive characteristic of Christianity among us and will ultimately change the Lord's recovery and make it part of Christianity. Brother Lee has said regarding the publication work of the Lord's recovery in China, "We only had one publication. Everything was published through Brother Nee's Gospel Room because the publication is really the trumpeting. The sounding of our trumpet is not just in the verbal message but more in the publication" (*Elders' Training, Book 8: The Life-pulse of the Lord's Present Move*, p. 162.) We must all rise up and with all our strength withstand any factor that would change the Lord's recovery into Christianity, even our own publications by our own ministers.

We all recognize that the vision and ministry of this age for the carrying out of God's move in this age was unveiled to and ministered within the Lord's recovery by our brothers Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. Their ministry builds up the Body of Christ and does not cause divisions, because it is, in truth, part of the New Testament ministry. This ministry has been the leadership in the Lord's recovery for over eighty years and must continue to be the leadership in the Lord's recovery today. Accordingly, our publication work must be to publish only the ministry as we have received it from these two brothers. There is no need for other publications by different brothers among us, which, though possibly based on the ministry of these two brothers, attempt to add another color or flavor to it, to reinterpret it for particular application, or to lower and soften it for easier acceptance by Christianity or easier understanding by the saints in the local churches in some places. This is quite simply the principle of the woman who leavens (Matt 13:33) and the way of Christianity. We cannot have this among us in the Lord's recovery at all, and we must all stand against it. Contrary to the natural concept of some among us, Brother Nee and Brother Lee did not minister in a way that made the riches of God's economy incomprehensible to the new or young believers among us. Time and time again even the newest believers among us have demonstrated that this ministry can be understood and grasped in its deepest significance by all. There is simply no need to simplify this ministry, to season it with the peculiar spices of various ministers, or to refashion it for local or cultural need. It is the one ministry of the one Body of Christ for the one testimony among all the local churches on the entire earth.

Brother Dong, when we look at the publication work of the Lord's recovery in the Portuguese and Spanish languages in South America, we are saddened that there are so many titles by you. To our realization, your writings have not added anything of significance to the revelation of the ministry of this age nor to the practical aspects of the recovery. We are also saddened that while so much energy has been spent in putting out these books, the complete New Testament Recovery Version in

Portuguese remains unpublished nearly twenty years since the work began. In contrast, the work on the New Testament Recovery Version in Russian was completed within five and a half years after the migration of the Lord's recovery to Russia, and now the Russian-speaking saints have it for their spiritual consumption and digestion. The saints, the churches, and the co-workers everywhere recognize the Recovery Version as a major source of life supply and divine truth in the one publication among us, and thus, to deprive the Portuguese-speaking saints of the Recovery Version with footnotes in their language while proliferating the work among them with your titles does not serve them well or faithfully. Certainly, there are places on the earth that currently do not have the resources to translate the Recovery Version properly into their local languages, but this is not the case in Brazil. In Brazil it is clearly a matter of misuse of resources, neglect of the need of the saints there, and abandonment of what the Lord has provided for His entire recovery for the building up of the one Body of Christ. While many protestations may be made about local needs consuming resources that could have been applied to the translation of the Recovery Version into Portuguese, the simple fact remains that much resource is spent on putting out book after book authored by you while the saints are deprived of the Recovery Version with footnotes in Portuguese. To our observation, it is not a matter of resource at all; it is a matter of burden, resolve, and hunger for the one ministry in the Lord's recovery.

Based on recent reports, we can begin to understand why there is so little interest in putting out the Recovery Version in Portuguese. We were told by some faithful and veracious brothers that you have publicly criticized some who use the Recovery Version. We have also heard credible reports about and have a transcript of your sharing in which you claim to receive new light and new revelation from God that supposedly surpasses what we received from the Word of God through the ministry of the age. We understand that you said in relation to the ministry of Brother Nee and Brother Lee, "You do not need knowledge; you need Spirit and life." We also were told that it

was said by someone, “Do not read the Recovery Version; Brother Dong is going on.” In addition, we understand that it was said, “Whatever you read should be read in the light of the up-to-date revelation of Brother Dong” which is considered by some as the “present truth,” and it was further spoken, “I am happy the Recovery Version has not come out; you would be confused by it.” However, even with this kind of speaking, we understand that there is a deep calling from within many seeking ones asking for the Recovery Version in Portuguese.

Recently it was reported to us by a trustworthy brother, and it has been confirmed by another trustworthy brother, that as you ministered the Word, you said that Matthew, Mark, and Luke were not in the Spirit. As a confirmation to these ones’ report, we want to quote a transcription of your speaking on February 11, 2005, which speaking is also made available on the internet.

Matthew, Mark and Luke did not record all the words of the Lord Jesus. They only recorded and wrote that which they knew, that which they could apply. But those real important words, they probably forgot all about them. Therefore, dear brothers, John was in the same situation that the other disciples were. [When he] made reference to saving the people and making them children of God. It was not known to him how do people grow in life. But praise the Lord, Paul saw that vision: that in God’s New Testament economy the Triune God was to be wrought into the tripartite man until our tripartite man would be completely saturated with the Triune God so that such divine life would be increased in us. That purpose was not presented in the gospels of Matthew, Mark nor Luke because when they wrote, they were not in the Spirit, because the Spirit already was. [Our understanding is that Brother Dong is referring to the Spirit as unveiled in John 7:39] The Lord Jesus, after His crucifixion, He became the Spirit. But, probably, they did not apply that Spirit. But John tells us that such Spirit is the Spirit of reality. That such Spirit already dwells within us, He becomes the indwelling person within us and will never come out of us. That Spirit is the One that leads us and directs us how to walk. And the more important function of such Spirit is to

remind us of the words which the Lord spoke to us. If we are not in the Spirit, we cannot understand all the words the Lord speaks to us. Now, when we are in the Spirit, little by little, all that the Lord spoke during those three and a half years of His ministry begins to be remembered and applied by us.

It was also reported to us that some have stopped attending the church meetings because of this speaking. Dear Brother Dong, according to 2 Timothy 3:16 all Scripture is God-breathed, and Peter tells us that “no prophecy of Scripture is of one’s own interpretation; no prophecy was ever borne by the will of man, but men spoke from God while being borne by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21). It has long been our testimony in the Lord’s recovery that the entire Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, as the Scripture itself affirms. It is simply against Christian truth to say that Matthew, Mark and Luke were not in the Spirit. We all must reject and condemn such speaking among us.

Other quite disturbing reports have come to us. It has been reported to us that on another occasion that you said that Joshua was not fully trained by Moses, and when Joshua said, “As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah” (Josh. 24:15), he was selfish and individualistic in that he said “as for me...” This is quite a peculiar understanding of Joshua’s declaration, which, by almost universal assent, was pleasing to the Lord. If you have some special insight into this passage, it is not an insight that has come to the Lord’s recovery, and it should not. It has also been reported that you have ministered that the apostles in Jerusalem were not among those who were persecuted [by Saul] because they were not among those who were calling on the name of the Lord. In the context of this sharing, it was implied that Anaheim is Jerusalem, that the co-workers there are “the apostles in Jerusalem,” and that hence they do not call on the name of the Lord in their homes. We find the application of this interpretation inappropriate, but more importantly we find the interpretation itself a slander against the Lord’s apostles, and thus, against the Lord Himself (cf. Matt. 10:40-41). There is no basis in the Word of God for the speaking in the three examples above. 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. While we do not know all that is being ministered in the churches in South America, these examples alarm us greatly. They are erroneous, different teachings and speakings in your ministry and publications that differ from the Word of God. We cannot consider such speaking as part of the New Testament ministry.

Other examples of your speaking that have been reported to us can be placed in the category of different teachings described in 1 Timothy 1:3-4. These are examples of speaking that are different from the ministry of the age in that they are different from God's economy and produce questionings among the saints. They are, as Brother Lee said in note 1 in 1 Timothy 1:4, "words, speeches, and conversations concerning such things as rumors, reports, true or false stories, and fictions." We will give three examples of speaking in this category that have been reported to us, speaking which is contrary to what has been delivered to us in the ministry of this age. 1) According to these reports, you have ministered that a National Geographic map of Eurasia has the appearance of the great red dragon in Revelation 12, that Africa is the place of the birth of the man-child based upon a drawing by some young boy, and that South America is part of the wilderness in Revelation 12 because in another picture in a magazine an eagle, representing the United States, has its body over North America, its wings over the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, and its feet resting solidly on South America. 2) Whereas Brother Lee said that the Gaius mentioned in 3 John 1 is not to be identified with the brothers named Gaius in Acts 19:29, Acts 20:4, and Rom. 16:23 and 1 Cor. 1:14 (note 1 in 3 John 1), you have asserted that this Gaius is the one mentioned in Rom. 16:23 and 1 Cor. 1:14 and that 3 John was, therefore, an epistle to the Corinthians. Similarly, you have claimed that the Demetrius in 3 John 12 is the same Demetrius as in Acts 19:24, contrary to Brother Lee's note on the latter verse. 3) You have said that both Barnabas and Paul were in their opinions at the time of their separation, but Brother Lee ministered something quite different, saying that "the

responsibility for the problem should rest with Barnabas, because after this incident he no longer appears in the divine record in Acts concerning the Lord's move in God's New Testament economy" (note 1 in Acts 15:39). Besides these three examples of teaching different things, we also have a transcript of your speaking in which it is said that Watchman Nee had the ministry of life, Witness Lee had the ministry of the Spirit, and you have the ministry of the practice of the Spirit and the life, as though you are the continuation and consummation of these two genuine ministers of the age. Brother Dong, while all these reports regard matters that are not as serious as those of the previous category, they nevertheless point to a different speaking and teaching "which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith" (1 Tim. 1:4).

These teachings might have been included in publications in the Spanish and Portuguese languages, and they concern us very much. How can we expect the one accord throughout South America to be realized and maintained when different teachings such as these are being spoken to the churches there? Many saints who love the Lord and His recovery cannot swallow such speaking, and divisions are being created due to this kind of speaking. More divisions will surely occur throughout South America unless only one ministry is spoken and published there. There cannot be two ministries in the churches there, or else there will be much confusion. Although Brother Lee gave you permission to translate his and Brother Nee's books into Portuguese, he was never one with your using his and Brother Nee's ministry as a platform to publish books under your own name and to try to present your different teaching as one with theirs. Those who were in the co-workers' fellowship in Anaheim on April 4-7, 2005, heard one brother testify that Brother Lee, in a meeting with the co-workers, told you that you were not doing the same work as we are doing in North America. Brother Dong, we should frankly review our history to realize how the present crisis has come about. As you have heard before and know, while Brother Lee was still among us, he knew of the discordant views and the different publications that were the seed forms of the things that trouble us today. He

expressed his displeasure with and criticism of those discordant views and different publications in strong and clear language to various brothers, including yourself. On the other hand, he tolerated and occasionally expressed appreciation for your work for the Lord's recovery. It must also be acknowledged that while Brother Lee was here, you and your co-workers were less bold in the publication work. For years you have known Brother Lee's and our feeling on the matter of multiple publications becoming multiple trumpets in the ministry of the Lord's recovery. Nevertheless, you accelerated the rate and distribution of your own publications. While the blending brothers remained true to their pledge of only re-speaking Brother Lee's ministry, you have increasingly published your own work. Does this not have every appearance of a ministry that rivals the general ministry being carried out through the blending brothers for the benefit of all the churches? We are greatly concerned regarding the work of the Lord's recovery in South America while such different teachings continue to be ministered and while, as reported to us, different kinds of control continue to be exercised over the churches in some places.

The seven examples cited above are merely representative of the kinds of things that are being reported to us; we are aware that many other like matters are being spoken in South America. But these examples clearly manifest a different speaking, a different sounding of the trumpet, in the Lord's one ministry in His recovery. Concerning this, we wish to recall what Brother Lee said in *Elders' Training, Book Seven: One Accord for the Lord's Move* (pp. 75-77):

Some of the so-called workers, the leading ones, like to think that they can take another line, not following the one line in the ministry. They may consider this and speaking in tongues without a definite interpretation small matters which we do not need to pay attention to. To some extent I myself have had this kind of thought in the past. Although I gave such a serious word that my toleration is over, some brothers may feel, not in a negative way, but in a very positive way concerning me, that they love me and do not think that I need to be that serious about little things such as these. I had the

same kind of thought in the past, but through my study I realized that in the New Testament the illustration of a trumpet being sounded to prepare others for battle is only used in 1 Corinthians [14:8]. This illustration in 1 Corinthians is not used in relation to the person of Christ in His Godhead or to the crucial, eternal redemption of Christ. This illustration is used concerning a minor point, the interpretation of tongues...It is concerning the matter of speaking in tongues, something which we consider to be so small, that the Apostle Paul inserted this verse with the word "battle" in it. No one among us would consider a battle a small thing. An army that is fighting a battle needs the morale, a fighting unity. In order to maintain this morale even a little dissension concerning the smallest matter has to be killed. If that little dissenting talk is not killed, the morale will be annulled. There will be no more morale, and surely the army will lose the fight, the battle. This warns me concerning the seriousness of the Lord's ministry. The Lord's ministry is like the sounding of the trumpet for the army to go on to war (Num. 10:9; Judg. 7:18). The Lord's ministry is a matter of a battle (2 Tim. 2:3 and note 1—Recovery Version).

It is inevitable that if there are two publications in a place, there will be two works, and in time there will be confusion and division. The Body of Christ is one; hence, there must be only one mouth with one voice in the Body (Rom. 15:5-6). Surely this is a limitation, but if we do not care for the limitation of the Body of Christ, our work will be lawless and will damage the Body of Christ. In the years since Brother Lee went to be with the Lord, your Portuguese and Spanish publications have increasingly created confusion and contention in the Lord's recovery in North America, in South America, in Europe, and in Africa. Complaints concerning this confusion and contention have come to our ears from all these continents. Dear Brother Dong, we implore you not to think simply that if your gospel work has good results, those results justify your work. According to the pattern of our Brother Nee and Brother Lee, we must take the oneness in the Body of Christ as the higher governing principle for the church, the ministry, and the work. Otherwise, the Lord's recovery is no different from Christianity.

If we do not take the oneness in the Body of Christ as our governing principle, how can we call ourselves the Lord's recovery at all? If all we care for is our gospel work regardless of what impact it has on the oneness of the Body of Christ, how are we different from Christianity?

During the recent meetings of the co-workers in Anaheim in April 2005, six continents were represented by brothers from the churches, including South America. In these meetings many brothers testified concerning the confusion that has been created by the publication and distribution of your ministry and that of Brother Titus Chu. There was much heartfelt fellowship from many of the co-workers, mostly related to the frustration they feel over the many difficult situations today in the Lord's recovery that have arisen because of different publications. We also know that others who have suffered the same did not have the opportunity to testify. Without doubt, the Lord's recovery was brought to each of the six continents through the ministry of Brother Nee and Brother Lee, yet now different ministries with a different speaking are being promoted and distributed in many places over the earth. This is happening through your co-workers or other saints from South America who have visited or migrated to cities in various countries on the six continents. In reaction, many complaints have been voiced concerning this matter. Because of this, we ask that you and your co-workers cease bringing or exporting to other countries any of your ministry, in any media, in Portuguese and Spanish or in any other languages, especially the volumes of daily readings published as *The Daily Food*. We also ask that you and your co-workers advise any saint who migrates to or visits another country to spread only the publications of brothers Watchman Nee and Witness Lee.

All the saints in the local churches respect the fact that it was the ministry of brothers Watchman Nee and Witness Lee that was responsible for the Lord's recovery being brought to their places. The co-workers and the saints everywhere should respect the work of the Lord in every place and meet and serve according to the leading there. When another ministry that is

not the ministry of these two brothers, brothers Nee and Lee, is brought to a place, spontaneously rivalry develops in the ministry there, and the Lord's work is damaged. We believe that all the co-workers on all the continents should be able to speak the same thing, walk in the same steps, and spread the same ministry with the same publications. We believe that everything that needs to be spoken and developed for the building up of the churches in every place is based on the teaching in the Bible and found in the writings of our two brothers, who were committed with the ministry of this age for the Lord's recovery today. Can we not all have one heart and take one way for the Lord's interest and economy? If many brothers in South America cannot take this one way, can they at least cease causing problems by not distributing your books in other countries?

While we make these requests to preserve the one testimony on the earth, we must confess that we are greatly concerned regarding the future of the Lord's recovery in South America. We are acutely aware, according to reports that we have received, that many saints there are crying out for the ministry of the age, yet it is not promoted there, and in some places it is not even allowed. Should this ministry be prohibited from any church? We appeal to you that you lead all the brothers in South America to make a strong decision to use only the publications of Brother Nee and Brother Lee in carrying out the work of the ministry in the Lord's recovery in both the Portuguese and Spanish languages in South America, lest the dissatisfaction, dissension, and division grow and multiply there. Should not all the saints in every church be encouraged to enjoy the writings of Brother Nee and Brother Lee for their spiritual supply and building up? Can we not bring the whole recovery over the entire earth into one ministry for the one goal of building up the one Body of Christ? We are exhorting you that you and your co-workers, as the only ones who can solve this problem, take the action needed. For the sake of the oneness in the Lord's recovery, we appeal to you to stop your publications in all languages. Most of all, we hope you could lead the other co-workers and the saints in your area back to a peaceful pursuit of Brother Nee's and Brother Lee's ministry

with the other churches and saints. We hope you could have a turn to a real commitment to building up the oneness among the churches in the Lord's recovery. We have the sincere hope that you and your co-workers would have a new resolve to work out that oneness through the fellowship of the blending co-workers and the churches and saints in the Lord's recovery. We hope you can return to the fellowship of the co-workers with a determination to be blended with them and to be limited by them in a real way. We love you, Brother Dong, and all the brothers who co-labor with you as fellow servants in the Lord who share a special bond with us through our precious heritage in the Lord's unique recovery.

Dear Brother Dong, we thank the Lord that in the past He has given you the grace to bring God's economy through the one ministry of Brother Nee and Brother Lee to many saints in Brazil and in other places in South America. We can never forget the words Brother Lee uttered in 1984 when he said in a report to the saints in North America concerning his visit to Brazil, "The blessing came in for the spread and the increase, mainly from the use of the Life-Study messages...on Genesis, on Exodus, on John, and a few other books. Listen, just so few, yet they have been used by the Lord to bless." Can the whole recovery not go back to this simple way which will bring in much blessing throughout the whole recovery? At the same time, we implore you not to be lifted up by the results of your work. God is after the building up of the Body of Christ as the bride of Christ. Simply having large numbers of people does not constitute the bride; otherwise, Christianity would have sufficed for God's interest on the earth long ago. Our work must be purely the impartation of Christ in God's economy, and the work of the cross must terminate everything that is natural and not of Christ. Brother Dong, our hope and prayer is that the ministry the Lord has given you, as part of the corporate ministry in the Lord's recovery, will have a glorious conclusion, not one that eventually results in much suffering, damage, chaos, and division among the saints and in the churches in the Lord's recovery over the earth. We hope that you would be willing to stop the distribution of your publications, which has become a

distraction from the ministry of Brother Nee and Brother Lee on almost every continent and even a ministry in competition and rivalry with their ministry. May all of our service in the Lord's recovery have a glorious ending before the Lord and before the saints.

This brief history explains what has changed in the atmosphere and activity in the Lord's recovery since our Brother Lee's departure. Today we deeply regret that we have let things develop to this extent. Since you are closely related to the work of the Lord's recovery in South America and also share the burden for the Lord's recovery in general, you should have the benefit of this fellowship from your fellow co-workers. We hope this letter will resolve some of the issues that have troubled the Lord's recovery in these past years and give us all a clearer view of what steps should be taken for our future together in the Lord's recovery. We must stress again that during the fellowship of the co-workers in April, there were very strong testimonies from the co-workers concerning the problems that are increasing among the churches and in the work of the Lord's recovery on every continent due to the confusion brought in by the multiple publications among us. Many brothers shared strong feelings of dissatisfaction with this situation and were eager to see a resolution. There has never been a co-workers' fellowship so frank and full of feeling since the time Brother Lee left us. As you know, many of the co-workers have tried to minimize the differences brought in by multiple publications and have tried to calm various local problems. This approach is simply not working, since the intrinsic problem is the existence and use of other speaking and publications in a way of rivalry to the general ministry in the Lord's recovery since Brother Lee's departure. You may object to the word *rivalry*, but that is what the saints feel and taste. We acknowledge the many genuine local churches with the dear saints that have been under your care over the years. We know that the co-workers and the saints love and respect the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee—this is undeniable. Unfortunately, it is also undeniable that there is a flavor and an atmosphere produced by your ministry that many, many saints cannot agree with. Thus, the

more you publish, the more problems come out. These problems are now multiplying all over the earth. It has been suggested that the problems stem from rumors or from comments made from the platform during conferences and trainings. However, to say this depreciates the intrinsic sense of life and spiritual discernment within the saints. We hope that you could see beyond these unreasonable explanations and personal sensitivities to consider the real differences that exist and the problems that they cause.

To summarize, we would like to restate the points of our concern that we have expressed in this letter:

1. We all desire to serve the Lord in His recovery under the controlling vision of the ministry of this age. All our work in the Lord's recovery must be governed by this vision of the building up of the one Body of Christ and not by any other lesser results, regardless of how scriptural or spiritual they may be.
2. This vision has been ministered to us by Brother Watchman Nee and Brother Witness Lee, and we feel that there is no need at all to add to, detract from, or modify what they have delivered to us. The great value and effectiveness of their ministry has long been demonstrated among us, and we are persuaded that its value and effectiveness still continues without aid.
3. There has arisen a different speaking in South America through your ministry and through the promotion of your ministry by some of the co-workers there. This different speaking ranges from quite serious slanders of some of the writers of the New Testament to differences in understanding of minor points of interpretation. The full range has produced questionings among the dear brothers and sisters in the churches and has greatly affected their morale and standing, even to the point that some have stopped attending the church meetings. We view your publications as an uncertain sounding of the trumpet among us.
4. The feeling expressed in the international co-workers' fellowship in April is that the multiple publications among us are causing many problems. We are not

challenging the validity of the churches or the sincerity of the co-workers but are appealing to you that you and your co-workers, as the only ones who can solve this problem, take the action needed to preserve the oneness among us.

5. We ask you that you and your co-workers cease producing and distributing your publications.
6. We further exhort you that you and your co-workers use only the publications of Brother Nee and Brother Lee in carrying out the work of the ministry in the Lord's recovery.

Finally, Brother Dong, in bringing all these matters to you, we do not at all deny that the churches in South America are genuine local churches and that all of you are part of the Lord's recovery today. We joyfully maintain that you and we are the churches in the Lord's recovery over the entire earth. But we write to you because of issues in the ministry that goes out to the churches. As we have said above, there should be one trumpeting in the ministry in the Lord's recovery, and in this matter we who continue the ministry should be strict. Our standing as the local churches is one thing; our co-laboring in the ministry is another. In this regard, we wish to close with these words from Brother Lee:

Whether or not a certain church takes the ministry does not decide whether that church is a genuine local church. The title of this message does not say "no uncertain sounding of the trumpet in the Lord's recovery" but "in the Lord's ministry." I am not talking about something in the Lord's recovery, but I am talking about the ministry...All the saints who have left the denominations, the divisive sects, and stand on the proper ground are a local church in their locality. They can express their opinions, but they may have nothing to do with this ministry...

For this reason, this ministry cannot allow anyone to pretend to be in it and yet still say something different. This does not mean that I ask you to stay away from your local church or that your local church is no longer a local church. What I am fellowshipping about is the impact of the ministry for the fighting of the Lord's interest in His recovery...

We need to have an army full of impact, and this army has no capacity and no time for anyone to express any kind of opinion. We are fighting a battle. The army began the fighting already in Taiwan. Now we want to see this army increasing to fight the battle not only in the United States but also in Canada, in Central America, in South America, in Europe, in Africa, in Australasia, and in the entire continent of Asia. This is what I want to see. I am not talking about the churches, I am talking about the ministry. The ministry is one thing, and the churches are another thing. These two things can be differentiated in the Epistles written by Paul. Paul's ministry is one category, and the churches are another category. (*Elders' Training, Book 7: One Accord for the Lord's Move*, pp. 80-82)

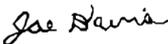
Dear Brother Dong, we would like to open ourselves for further fellowship with you and your co-workers concerning the best way to carry these matters out. We brothers, representing Africa, Asia, Australasia, Europe and North America, are open to your fellowship, Brother Dong, and to that of your co-workers toward a true resolution and restoration of our testimony of oneness as the primary item in the Lord's recovery today. We ask you to please bring all these matters to the Lord in prayer.

Your Brothers,

  
Francis Ball

  
Benjamin Chen

  
Minoru Chen

  
Joe Davis

  
Lin Horng

  
Kung-Huan Huang

  
Ron Kangas

  
Elton Karr

  
Joel Kennon

  
James Lee

  
Albert Lim

  
David Lutz

  
Ray MacNee

  
Ed Marks

  
Benson Phillips

*Suey Liu*  
Liu Suey

*Dick Taylor*  
Dick Taylor

*Ron Topsom*  
Ron Topsom

*Dan Towle*  
Dan Towle

*Paul Wu*  
Paul Wu

*Andrew Yu*  
Andrew Yu

## PRINCIPLES CONCERNING THE LORD'S TABLE IN VIEW OF THE ONENESS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

The Body of Christ is one and cannot be divided, and it is our great joy and privilege to testify of this oneness in the local churches. The testimony that we bear is unique, for it is a testimony that can be borne only on the genuine ground of oneness that we in the local churches share as our blessed inheritance. If we lose our oneness, we lose our testimony as the Lord's unique recovery on earth, for it is this oneness that the Lord is recovering today for His full expression in His corporate Body, which is His increase and enlargement in humanity.

In His wisdom, the Lord did not leave us without a practical symbol of this oneness. The symbol of the oneness that we enjoy is seen in the bread at the Lord's table, which signifies not only the physical body of Jesus given in His death for our redemption but also the mystical Body of Christ produced through His resurrection for His unique expression. When we partake of the bread at the Lord's table, we identify ourselves with the crucified and resurrected Lord and with His universal Body, and we declare to the entire universe that we stand as one, apart from all division. To partake of the bread, therefore, is to touch the Lord's heart, for the bread and our joint participation in it touch the Lord's Body, for which He gave His life.

Sadly, not all of those among us treasure the oneness of the Body of Christ, and some have even risen up to oppose it by establishing "tables" apart from and in reckless disregard of the feeling of the Body. In recent years, Brother Dong Yu Lan and his co-workers have exhibited such a disregard for the Lord's proper testimony and the oneness that the vast majority in the Lord's recovery are endeavoring to maintain. They have set up many independent "table" meetings, often in localities where proper local churches already exist. Many saints have suffered significantly under this influence and have abstained from

partaking of the bread and the cup in their localities because they have had the realization that the bread there could no longer symbolize the unique Body of Christ but had become sectarian bread. The potential may now exist for those who have come out from the divisive influence of Dong Yu Lan's work to establish their own "tables" in haste, apart from the fellowship of the Body and thus with the risk of causing greater harm to the Lord's testimony. May the Lord use this article, which presents excerpts from the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, to impress His loving seekers that the establishing of the Lord's table is a weighty matter that involves not just one locality or group of believers but the universal Body of Christ.

### **The Lord's Table Being a Matter of Utmost Seriousness Because It Involves the Body of Christ**

The establishing of the Lord's table in a locality is a matter that must be taken with the utmost seriousness because it involves the Body of Christ, the Lord's heart's desire. To establish a "table" in a city where a proper local church already exists is particularly offensive to the Lord:

Setting up churches according to our own wishes is the greatest sin. We must fear founding a church more than anything else. Brothers, do we see the seriousness of this matter? Nothing is worse than setting up a church at will. We can found anything, but we must never establish a church in this manner because this involves the problem of the Body of Christ. We must be clear about this matter before God. 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. (Watchman Nee, *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 56, pp. 379-380)

Because the bread at the Lord's table signifies the one Body of Christ, we must examine ourselves as to whether or not we are involved in any division. If we partake of the bread in a divisive way and fail to discern the Body, we will damage the Lord's

testimony and incur His judgment for partaking of the bread and the cup in an unworthy manner (1 Cor. 11:27-29).

We all need to discern Christ's mystical Body. Whenever we touch the loaf at the Lord's table, we must realize that the loaf denotes this unique Body. Because the loaf denotes the mystical Body, there should be no divisions among us. If we are still involved in division, yet we partake of the loaf, it will not be a profit to us, but a loss. (Witness Lee, *The Spirit and the Body*, p. 215)

When we partake of any bread on a table that is called the Lord's table, we must discern carefully whether that bread signifies the universal Body of Christ, without division, or not. If it does not, we should not partake of it. (Witness Lee, *A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery*, p. 55)

Never consider division an insignificant thing. We must take the Lord's table in a reverent way and in fear, lest we touch the Lord's Body without discernment. We need to discern that what we are about to partake of is the unique Body of Christ. In this unique Body there must not be any division. If I am not involved in division, then I shall have the peace and a clear conscience to touch the Lord's Body. (Witness Lee, *The Spirit and the Body*, p. 215)

Because the Lord's table is an exceedingly serious matter, we should never establish the table in haste, without the proper fellowship in the Body both locally and universally, and without the proper appreciation of the oneness of the church as the universal Body of Christ.

### **The Proper Ground of the Church**

In order to be safeguarded from division so that we may partake of the Lord's table in the unique fellowship of the universal Body of Christ, there is the need for a local church to maintain its standing on the proper ground, the ground of oneness. The New Testament reveals that the church ground is constituted of three crucial elements: the unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ, the unique ground of locality, and the reality of the Spirit of oneness.

The first element of the constitution of the church ground is the unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ, which is called "the oneness of the Spirit" (Eph. 4:3). This is the oneness that the Lord prayed for in John 17. It is a oneness of the mingling of the processed Triune God with all the believers in Christ. This oneness is in the name of the Father (John 17:6, 11), denoting the Father's person, in which is the Father's life. This oneness is even in the Triune God through sanctification by His holy word as the truth (John 17:14-21). This oneness is ultimately in the divine glory for the expression of the Triune God (John 17:22-24). Such a oneness was imparted into the spirit of all the believers in Christ, in their regeneration by the Spirit of life with Christ as the divine life; this oneness has become the basic element of the church ground.

The second element of the church ground is the unique ground of the locality in which a local church is established and exists. The New Testament presents us a clear picture that all the local churches, as the expression of the universal church—the universal Body of Christ—are located in their respective cities. Hence, we see the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), the church in Antioch (Acts 13:1), the church in Cencrea (Rom. 16:1), the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2), and the seven churches in Asia in seven respective cities (Rev. 1:4, 11). Every city as the boundary in which a church exists is the local ground of that church. Such a unique ground of locality preserves the church from being divided by many different matters as different grounds in the way that divisive denominations such as the Baptists, the Presbyterians, the Lutherans, the Methodists, and the Episcopalians are divided.

The third element of the church ground is the reality of the Spirit of oneness, expressing the unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ on the unique ground of locality of a local church. Briefly, the third element of the church ground is the reality of the Spirit, who is the living reality of the divine Trinity (1 John 5:6; John 16:13). It is by this Spirit that the oneness of the Body of Christ becomes real and living. It is also through this Spirit that the ground of locality is applied in life and not in legality. And it is by this Spirit that the genuine ground of the church is linked with the Triune God (Eph. 4:3-6). (Witness Lee, *A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery*, pp. 28-29)

In order to avoid a situation of division and confusion, it is imperative that we take proper care of these three crucial elements to keep, in practicality, the genuine oneness of the church without any division (Eph. 4:3). Based on the three elements of the church ground, it is clear that the ground of the church, which is the ground of oneness, is not only local but also universal. Of the three elements of the church ground, both the first and the third are universal, not local. In order to stand properly as a genuine local church, we must fully respect both the local and the universal aspects of the church ground.

The ground of the church should not be merely local; it should also be universal. Locally, the ground of the church is the ground of locality; universally, the ground of the church is the genuine oneness. Christ has only one Body. The oneness of Christ's Body is the universal ground of the church.

Suppose all the local churches in Korea are one with each other, but are not one with the churches in other continents. If this were the case, the churches in Korea may have the local ground, the ground of locality, but they would not have the universal ground, the ground of the oneness of the Body. In the entire universe Christ has only one Body. All the local churches in the six continents—in North America, in South America, in Europe, in Africa, in Australia, and in Asia—are one Body. This is the universal ground of the genuine oneness.

The church is one locally based upon its locality, the city, and it is one universally based upon the one Body of Christ. This local and universal oneness is the genuine ground of the church. (Witness Lee, *Vital Factors for the Recovery of the Church Life*, pp. 52-53)

Finally, we need to see that the genuine ground of oneness is in our regenerated human spirit. If we attempt to stand on the ground of oneness in a mental way without being in the spirit, we will make the ground of oneness a factor of division.

By reading some of the books we have published, some dear ones today have picked up the teaching of the ground of locality. To them, however, the ground of locality may be something in the mentality. In this way, even the ground of oneness becomes a divisive factor. The ground of oneness is for oneness, not for division, but if we take the ground of

oneness in our mind and make it a mental matter, right away it becomes a divisive factor. Instead, we need to return to the spirit...The recovery is possible only in our spirit. (Witness Lee, *Enjoying the Riches of Christ for the Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ*, p. 188)

### **A Matter of the Ground, Not of Condition**

The condition of a local church may change, but our recognition of a genuine local church is not based on its condition but on its maintaining the proper ground.

A local church is preserved from being divided by its ground, not by its condition....The condition of a certain church may be good, but that does not assure that the ground of that church is right. A local church may be low in its condition, yet it is still a genuine local church as long as it keeps the genuine ground of the oneness of the Body. On the other hand, a local church may be high in its condition, but it is a division, a local sect, as long as it does not care for the genuine ground of the oneness of the Body of Christ expressed in its locality. (Witness Lee, *A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery*, p. 51)

The seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 differed in their conditions. In fact, five of those churches were in conditions of significant degradation. The Lord, however, recognized them as genuine local churches based not on their condition but on their standing on the proper ground.

### **Tests of a Genuine Local Church**

There are specific tests to determine whether or not a church is a genuine local church. A group of believers must pass all six tests before it can be recognized as a proper church in its locality. (See Witness Lee, *Young People's Training*, pp. 185-198; *The Spirit and the Body*, pp. 210-214; *A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery*, pp. 52-54.)

#### ***No Special Name***

A local church must not take any name other than the name of the Lord Jesus, who is our Husband (1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 11:2).

To take any other name is to commit spiritual fornication and to become a denomination.

### ***No Special Teaching or Practice***

A local church must not have any special teaching or practice. The denominations have their particular teachings and practices, such as foot-washing, speaking in tongues, or a particular mode of baptism. They receive the believers based on a particular teaching or practice, not based on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If we insist on anything other than the common Christian faith as the ground for our receiving of the believers (Titus 1:4; 2 Pet. 1:1; Rom. 14:1; 15:7), we are sectarian.

### ***No Special Fellowship***

As Christians we have been called into the fellowship of the Son of God (1 Cor. 1:9). The denominations have a special fellowship that is narrower than the fellowship of the Son of God. Those in the denominations limit themselves to fellowship with those who hold to their particular, exclusive practices or doctrines. A special fellowship is sectarian, and we must reject it.

### ***No Separate Administration***

A local church has only one eldership with one administration (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). A certain Christian group may not have a special name, a special teaching or practice, or a special fellowship, but if it has its own administration, separate from the unique administration of the church in its locality, that group is a sect and must be recognized as such.

### ***Willing to Have Fellowship with All the Local Churches in the Universal Body of Christ***

A genuine local church must remain in the universal fellowship of the Body of Christ, which is the fellowship of the Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14). To remain in this fellowship, a local church must be willing to open itself to have fellowship with all the local churches on the earth. If a local church isolates itself from other local churches, it becomes a local sect.

***No Hidden Connections with Other Organizations***

A group may pass all of the foregoing tests and appear to be a genuine local church. However, if that group has hidden connections with other organizations, it too is sectarian.

Before establishing the Lord's table in our locality, we must carefully consider whether there is any other group of believers in our locality who pass the above six tests. If there is such a group, we have no choice but to recognize them as the genuine local church in our locality. In this case, we have no freedom to establish another "table" in our city. If there is no such group, and if we ourselves pass every one of the six tests of a genuine local church, we have the freedom to stand as the church on the ground of oneness and start the Lord's table. However, we should not do this in a hasty or isolated way; we should do it by having fellowship with the nearby churches and with the co-workers in the Lord's recovery, both of whom represent the Body of Christ. Before we establish the Lord's table, we should be sure that what we are doing is in the fellowship of the universal Body of Christ.

***The Fellowship of the Body of Christ***

The fellowship of the Body of Christ is the circulation of the Spirit in and among the members of the Body, similar to the circulation of blood in the human body. It is not a special fellowship of a particular doctrine or practice but the flow of the divine life in and among the members of the Body. If we would have the proper practice of the local churches, we must have an adequate knowledge of the fellowship of the Body of Christ.

***The Fellowship of the Apostles***

The fellowship of the Body of Christ is the fellowship of the apostles, which is based on and issues from the apostles' teaching.

The fellowship of the Body of Christ is the fellowship of the apostles—the divine fellowship between all the believers and the Triune God. The term the fellowship of the apostles is used in Acts 2:42: "And they were continuing steadfastly in the

teaching and the fellowship of the apostles." Then, 1 John 1:3 tells us that the fellowship of the apostles is not merely with us, the believers, but also with the Father and the Son. Here John did not mention the Spirit directly, because he was speaking in the Spirit. The Spirit was there already. The fellowship of the apostles is the fellowship of the Body of Christ, the divine fellowship between all the believers and the Triune God.

The fellowship of the apostles is based upon the apostles' teaching. Fellowship always comes after teaching. If there is no teaching, there is no element or realm of the fellowship. Actually, the teaching is the element and the realm of the fellowship. By the Lord's mercy, today in the Lord's recovery we are under the apostles' teaching and in the apostles' fellowship. The fellowship of the recovery which we are in is the recovered fellowship of the apostles. This fellowship was lost, but it has been recovered. Today we are in the fellowship of the apostles, which is the fellowship of the Lord's recovery. (Witness Lee, *A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery*, pp. 38-39)

Any teaching that is different from the unique teaching of the apostles concerning God's New Testament economy (1 Tim. 1:3-4) produces a sectarian fellowship that will ultimately lead to division.

### ***The Fellowship for the Lord's Unique Recovery***

The fellowship of the apostles that we enjoy is the fellowship for the Lord's unique recovery, in which there is only one work to carry out the one New Testament ministry for the building up of the one Body of Christ.

We always need to remember that we are in the Lord's recovery and that His recovery is unique. There is not another recovery, just as there is not another Body of Christ or another New Testament. The fellowship of the apostles is the fellowship for this unique recovery of the Lord. When we see something going on in the recovery which is not so good, we need to have this kind of fellowship and a proper attitude....When we see something wrong in the recovery or in any of the local churches, we should try the best to help the

situation by fellowshipping so that it can be improved and corrected. If there is anything wrong, we can and should fellowship and pray together and seek the Lord's leading to improve the situation for the benefit of all the saints. This will be a real help to the Lord's recovery.

We should not have the thought that we can do a particular work according to our way in the recovery. We may be very gifted and have a large capacity to work out something. But what we work out may be the same as worldly people carrying out a certain enterprise. We have to realize that in the Lord's recovery there is only one work. (Witness Lee, *A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery*, pp. 39-40)

### ***The Need for the Fellowship among the Churches to Keep the Universal Oneness of the Body of Christ***

In order to keep the universal oneness of the Body of Christ, it is imperative that the churches enjoy fellowship with one another, which is to enjoy the circulation of the divine life among the churches. When we have the proper circulation, the germs of division are swallowed up, and we are kept in a healthy condition. If we isolate our locality from others or have separate territories in the work, we will cause division in the Body and lose our testimony of oneness.

Some brothers may be afraid for others to come and visit them. But what we need today among the churches is more divine circulation, more fellowship. There are about fifty churches in California, but there is not much fellowship among them. This is where our shortcoming is, and this is why we are weak. The circulation helps us and helps others. It helps everyone in the Body. We need the fellowship. This fellowship is the fellowship of the apostles, which is today the fellowship of the recovery. The fellowship today among us is the recovered apostles' fellowship.

All the churches around the globe are part of the one recovery of the Lord. There should not be any boundaries of separation among the churches. Some co-workers in the past did have the feeling that a certain area was their territory. But we need to see that it is not healthy or profitable in the Lord's recovery for anyone to have a boundary for his work. The only boundary is the boundary of the recovery. We should not say,

"That's my church. That's the work in my territory." We have only one work. That work is the work of the recovery based upon the teaching of the apostles. The remedy to the problem of so-called boundaries and territories among the churches is the fellowship. We should not have the thought that others coming to our place may disturb our work. We do not need to defend our work. Our work is the Lord's work, which is the recovery's work. We need the adequate fellowship among all the churches in all the nations, and we need a clear vision concerning the apostles' teaching and the apostles' fellowship.

This fellowship is to keep the universal oneness of the Body of Christ (John 17:11b, 20-23; Eph. 4:3-6). Ephesians 4:3 charges us to endeavor to keep the oneness of the Spirit. We can keep this oneness because it is our possession already. We have this oneness; thus, we only need to keep it. Regardless of how weak we may be, we still have this oneness. This is because we still have the circulation of the "blood," the circulation of the Spirit. If we did not have this circulation, we would be spiritually dead. As long as we have life, regardless of how weak we may be, we have this oneness. It is the possession of every believer. What we need, then, is just to keep this oneness. When we keep this oneness, we are in the unique fellowship of the Lord's recovery. (Witness Lee, *A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery*, pp. 42-43)

### ***The Fellowship of the Local Churches***

The local churches are the many local expressions of the universal Body of Christ. Although they are kept away from one another by geography, they cannot be divided. In order to keep the universal fellowship of the Body of Christ, there is the need for the local churches to fellowship with all the genuine local churches throughout the entire earth.

The local churches should fellowship with all the genuine local churches on the whole earth to keep the universal fellowship of the Body of Christ. Any local church that does not keep this universal fellowship of the Body of Christ is divisive and becomes a local sect. Some so-called local churches are not genuine and have become divisions; we do not need to fellowship with such "churches." But we should have fellowship with all the genuine local churches on the

whole earth to keep the universal fellowship of the Body of Christ. If not, we are no longer a church but a sect. A church is one that remains in the Body; a sect is a group of believers who divide themselves from the Body. When my arm remains in the body, it is a part of my living body. If it is cut off and separated from the body, it becomes a dead thing. (Witness Lee, *A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery*, p. 44)

### ***How to Deal with the Divisions***

It is a tragic fact that some churches have separated themselves from the fellowship of all the local churches and have become divisive sects. In considering how to deal with the divisions, we must first consider the isolated churches as divisive sects based not on their condition but on the improper ground that they have taken. Further, we must exercise discernment concerning how to deal with those who have come into contact with the divisions or have been infected by the germs of division.

We should not recommend any believer in the local churches to have any share in the meetings and activities of the divisions. Nevertheless, there may be some who attend the Lord's table meeting in a local church and, after taking the table, they leave to go to a meeting of the divisive ones to listen to a message. If any believer in the local churches would attend the meetings and share the activities of those divisions, the local churches should not put him away from the fellowship of the church, as long as he is not infected by and does not promote anything that is divisive. Our dealing with such a person depends on whether or not he has been infected by the "germs" of division, and whether or not he is passing on those germs to others. If he does pass on those germs, we must advise him not to do this. We cannot tolerate any germs of division.

If any believer who is meeting with any of these sectarian divisions would attend the meetings of the local churches, or contact the believers meeting in the local churches, he should not be rejected, as long as he does not promote anything divisive.

However, anyone who is aggressive for and promotes the sectarian divisions should be considered divisive and should be rejected after a first and second admonition (Titus 3:10).

I believe that this is the fair and scriptural way to deal with the divisions that have separated themselves from the genuine local churches and have broken the unique fellowship of the Body of Christ. Anyhow, according to the apostles' teaching in the New Testament, anyone who makes the division, who is divisive and bears the "germs" of division, that is, who is factious, sectarian, we should refuse them (Titus 3:10) and turn away from them (Rom. 16:17). (Witness Lee, *A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery*, pp. 48-49)

### **Discerning the Body**

If we are to partake of the Lord's table, we must discern the Body and examine ourselves to see if we are involved in any division. Our testimony depends on our discerning the Body.

The Lord's recovery is neither a movement nor a division. Those of every age must be together in harmony. We are not a division, and there are no divisions among us. Rather, we are the testimony of the one Body and the one Spirit. Whenever we come to the Lord's table, we declare to the whole universe that we are one, that we have come out of division and that there are no divisions among us. When we touch the one loaf, which signifies the unique Body of Christ in the universe, we must have the witness in our conscience that we are not involved in division. If we do not have a clear conscience regarding division when we touch the Lord's table, we shall suffer, for we shall eat and drink without discerning the Body. This will not be profitable to us. May the Lord have mercy upon us that whenever we come to the Lord's table, we shall exercise our conscience to determine whether or not we are involved in something divisive.

Because today is a day of confusion and division, we must discern what group of Christians is the genuine testimony of the one Body. Then we ourselves must be certain not to have any seed of division or source of division among us. If there is no division among us, our conscience will be clear, and we shall bear a strong testimony of the Lord's Body to the universe. Then the Lord's blessing will be upon us. (Witness Lee, *The Spirit and the Body*, pp. 215-216)

