

March 15, 2009

Dear saints throughout Central America and the Caribbean:

We rejoice that in recent years the churches throughout Central America and the Caribbean have enjoyed an unprecedented level of one accord in our fellowship and coordination to cooperate with the Lord to carry out His move. Our moving together with one another and with the Lord has brought in a rich and manifest blessing. The churches are increasing in life and in numbers and the Lord's recovery is spreading throughout this area. Our coordination in completing the construction of the conference center in San Pedro Sula and the semi-annual gathering of the leading ones in the area for a week of prayer are clear manifestations of what the Lord is gaining among us. We should all recognize the blessing that is upon us through our exercise to carry out the one work of the ministry in the one flow of the Lord's move. A crucial factor in progressing toward this goal is to continue in the unique New Testament ministry, the content of which is the unique New Testament teaching of the apostles. This commitment is reflected in our practice of being restricted in one publication.

Regrettably, we must inform you of a danger to the one accord, to the testimony of oneness in the Lord's recovery, and to the Lord's move among us. This danger stems from a different work carried out in the name of the Lord's recovery that is active and is spreading different teachings in Central America and the Caribbean. This work is the work of Dong Yu Lan and his co-workers, based in Brazil. Over the years Brother Dong's workers have made many attempts to spread his publications in this part of the earth, in spite of repeated requests not to do so from the brothers bearing responsibility in the work and in the churches in this area. Brother Dong's workers have also worked independently, not to build up the Body of Christ expressed in local churches, but to build up their own work. This work has damaged the Lord's testimony, bringing in confusion that has resulted in some saints leaving the Lord's recovery. Brother Dong himself has stated his strong intention to bring his work into Central America and the Caribbean. His justifications for doing this annul key principles in the practice of the Lord's recovery. We therefore warn the saints throughout Central America and the Caribbean not to become entangled in the work of Dong Yu Lan and not to receive its divisive teachings. Such a warning is essential to preserve what the Lord has gained among us and to give Him a firm basis to advance further.

Repeated Attempts to Spread Brother Dong's Literature

Brother Dong's publications first appeared in Central America and Puerto Rico in the 1980s. When Brother Mel Porter, a co-worker who visited several places in the Caribbean in those years, reported to Brother Lee the presence of Brother Dong's publications, Brother Lee strongly stated that the distribution of such publications was improper. Significantly, Brother Lee's fellowship concerning the ministry being restricted in one publication work was given in 1986. However, Brother Dong has behaved as though he is exempt from this fellowship. Although Brother Lee did not insist that Brother Dong stop his independent publication work, he did not approve of that work and tried on several occasions to help Brother Dong and his co-workers to labor in a coordinated way for the carrying out of one work with one ministry.

In the mid-1990s Brother Dong's workers made a concerted effort to bring his publications into Central America. Within a short time, however, the brothers in Central America realized that Brother Dong's publications were causing confusion in the churches. Because of this they asked Dong Yu Lan's co-workers not to distribute his publications in Central America any longer. Brother Dong and his co-workers reacted by sending a vitriolic letter on March 23, 1997, to the responsible brothers of all the Spanish-speaking churches in North America, Central America, and South America. The letter was full of accusations, blaming unnamed brothers from North America of trying to raise up a wall between the churches in North and Central America and the churches in South America. These accusations were false. The real issue was that Brother Dong wanted to carve out the entire Spanish-speaking world as a domain for his own publications and work. The accusatory letter was distributed in a conference in El Salvador by Helcio Almeida, one of Brother Dong's co-workers.

The damage caused by this action was somewhat mitigated by a joint letter signed by the co-workers from the United States, Brazil, and Taiwan after much fellowship. That letter, issued on August 1, 1997, affirmed the co-workers' commitment to carry out one blended work according to the unique New Testament ministry. It stated clearly that "that there should be only one publishing work in the Lord's recovery and in the whole earth, that is, the one that publishes and distributes the writings of Brothers Watchman Nee and Witness Lee." It also said, "In order to avoid concerns and unnecessary questions among the churches, we agree that today no other publications should appear to compete with, or even worse, replace the books of these two servants of the Lord." Although he signed this statement, Brother Dong never suspended his rival publication work and was only temporarily restrained in his efforts to export his publications to Central America and the Caribbean.

In 1998 Brother Dong's work sent some of his followers to both Costa Rica and Honduras. There they rented houses and tried to distribute Dong Yu Lan's literature in complete disregard of the joint statement that Brother Dong had his co-workers had just signed. In each case the local brothers made it clear that they would not receive Brother Dong's ministry. After unsuccessfully attempting for six months to establish Brother Dong's work among the saints, his workers returned to Brazil.

In the early part of this decade, at a conference in El Salvador in which three co-workers from North America spoke, Anibal Arrancibia, another of Brother Dong's co-workers, set up a table to distribute Brother Dong's books. He did this without any fellowship with the local brothers bearing responsibility for the conference. When they learned of it, they asked Anibal to stop his distribution of Brother Dong's books, making it clear that they did not want to receive another ministry.

The churches' clear and united stand to reject his publications only temporarily deterred Brother Dong from attempts to establish his ministry in this area. For at least the past year and a half, Brother Dong's workers have again been active in both Central America and the Caribbean. Wherever they go to work, they bring Dong Yu Lan's books, and they endeavor to cultivate an exclusive relationship between those whom they contact and Brother Dong's work in Brazil.

An Independent Work

Since the middle of 2007 it has become increasingly evident that Brother Dong's work is seeking to make fresh inroads into Central America and the Caribbean. Co-workers of Brother Dong from London, Canada, began to visit Nicaragua. Later they expanded their visitation to El Salvador and Honduras. Saints meeting with local churches in the Lord's recovery have been drawn away to meet apart from those churches. Late last year workers who follow Brother Dong's ministry went to Cuba, where they claim to have established a meeting. All of this work in Cuba and Central America was done with no fellowship whatsoever with the existing churches or with the co-workers involved in the work in those countries.

This disregard for fellowship with the existing churches and workers makes it clear that the goal of Brother Dong's work is not the building up of the Body of Christ in the one common fellowship of the believers, but the building up of a private work. In 1996, near the end of his life, Brother Lee testified:

Beginning in 1984 I called three urgent conferences of the co-workers and elders. In my opening word I pointed out that among us there is the tendency of division. By this I meant that quite a few capable co-workers in the Lord's recovery liked to keep their district as their empire, and they liked to attract people to be their particular co-workers. We are all co-workers generally, but some became particular co-workers with certain attracting ones. Therefore, I warned you all. (Witness Lee, *A Word of Love to the Co-workers, Elders, Lovers, and Seekers of the Lord*, p. 38)

We brothers echo Brother Lee's word of warning. We should not follow any worker who attracts others to himself. Brother Lee told us:

Such a one who makes himself attractive is wrong already, and if you are attracted to follow him, you help him to be wrong. You destroy yourself, and you also destroy him... Do not say, I am one with Brother So-and-so. To be one with anyone in particular is wrong. To be one with all the saints is right. (Witness Lee, *A Word of Love to the Co-workers, Elders, Lovers, and Seekers of the Lord*, p. 57)

Our prayer is that none of the saints in the churches throughout Central America and the Caribbean would be drawn away from the unique fellowship of the churches in the Body of Christ to follow any particular worker.

Statements of Intent

Our concern for the saints in this area is based not only on what we have seen in the past or on recent developments, but also on Brother Dong's clearly stated intent to build up his work in the Spanish-speaking world without regard for the existing churches. On October 14, 2007, in London, Ontario, Canada, he falsely claimed that Brother Lee "entrusted me with all the Spanish-speaking countries in all the Americas." He then said that he had withdrawn from Central America temporarily, acknowledging that the churches here had not received his ministry, but then he proclaimed, "One day we will go back."

On November 16, 2008, in a report to the church in Sao Paulo concerning the northward expansion of Brother Dong's work, a co-worker of Brother Dong from Chile said, "I want to encourage you, not only for Chile, but to encourage all the churches in South America to go to Central America and Mexico." Such statements demonstrate their definite intent to carry out a work in this part of the earth apart from and even contrary to the fellowship of the churches here.

A Distorted and Deviant Teaching to Rationalize Disregard of Local Churches

In his speaking in London, Ontario, Brother Dong advanced a dangerously unscriptural principle that would govern his work in Central America when it returned there. He said that if a church fails to "lay eggs," that is, increase in numbers, "We also will raise [up] a church in that place... So if you don't lay eggs, you lose the ground of the church there." Brother Dong's teaching replaces the scriptural standard of the ground of the church with an unscriptural and subjective standard, one which can easily be abused as a pretext to cause division by establishing "churches" in cities where properly standing local churches already exist. According to the Bible and our longstanding practice in the Lord's recovery, the ground of the church is a matter of standing, not of condition.

We need to make a clear distinction between the condition of the church and the ground of the church. The church may be correct in its ground, but poor in its condition. Of course, we look to the Lord that we may be right in both ground and condition. However, the decision concerning recognizing a church must not be made according to condition, but according to the ground. This is the way to discern what the proper church is. (Witness Lee, *Young People's Training*, p. 198)

We share Brother Lee's burden for the condition of the churches, and it is for this reason that we are writing to you. The churches throughout Central America and the Caribbean are enjoying unprecedented blessing in life, numbers, and spread because of their clarity concerning the practice of the church life locally and the fellowship of the Body universally. Brother Dong's teaching is gravely wrong and threatens both the standing and the condition of the churches. To teach that a church loses the ground if it fails to produce increase is against the truth. There is no such teaching in the Bible, and there is no example in the Bible of a second church being established in a city. Brother Dong's teaching sanctions division, and we have every reason to believe that division will be the result if his ministry and work are allowed entry into the churches in Central America and the Caribbean, as it has done in other nations.

Brother Dong's erroneous teaching is reflected in the practice of his work. His work has deviated from basic principles brought to us through the ministry in the Lord's recovery. When Brother Dong's workers go to places where there are churches standing properly on the ground of oneness, they often avoid contact with them. Instead, his workers draw men to themselves (Acts 20:30) and bring them into a private fellowship separated from the one

fellowship of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 1:9). This closed circle of fellowship is centered around a personal work and ministry, the work and ministry of Dong Yu Lan and his co-workers. This practice is explicitly condemned by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:12. Both Brother Nee and Brother Lee made it clear that all ministry and work are for the unique goal of building up the local churches as the practical expressions of the Body of Christ (see the attached excerpts). The New Testament ministry is not for itself, and the proper work does not raise up groups of believers loyal to itself apart from the churches.

Our conscience bears witness that the ministry that raised up the churches in Central America and the Caribbean, the ministry of our Brother Witness Lee and of the co-workers who are continuing in his steps, has never been carried out in such a way. When Brother Lee was sent to Taiwan in the 1950s, he labored on, among, and with the saints in the churches there. When he returned to Taiwan in the mid-1980s to have a "new start," his labor was to bring the existing saints and churches into the God-ordained way; he did not abandon or neglect the existing churches or raise up a work apart from them. Similarly, when the co-workers went to Russia, London, Mexico City, and other places, they did not start a work to raise up something separate and apart from the saints and churches that were already there. They joined themselves to the churches, they labored to perfect the saints already meeting, and they brought the increase gained by them to the churches.

Many aspects of Brother Dong's teaching and work are contrary to the healthy teaching of the apostles (1 Tim. 6:3). Some of his deviations were documented in a letter of warning which the churches in Mexico read in a national conference on January 18, 2009. Rather than repeat those points, we would simply refer the saints to the statement posted at <http://www.lasiglesiaslocalesenmexico.org/cartas/CartaEspanol.pdf>.

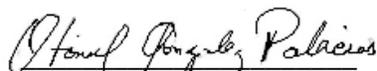
We ask all of the saints throughout Central America and the Caribbean to be vigilant and jealous to protect the Lord's interest in this area (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2). We simply cannot afford to let any cause of discord damage what the Lord has already gained among us and what the Lord desires to do among us in the days to come. We ask you to render your full cooperation to the leading ones in the churches who "watch over your souls as those who will render an account" (Heb. 13:17). If you become aware of any attempts to bring Dong Yu Lan's publications among the saints or if you are aware of any promotion of his work, please let the leading ones know. Pray much for the Lord's interest and dive into the riches of Christ which He has opened to us in His recovery through the ministry of His servants, Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. This is our best protection, and this is the way that the Lord can preserve us and take us on with all the churches in His recovery over the whole earth for the fulfillment of His divine economy.

Antigua:


Cosmore Edwards

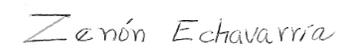

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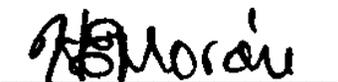

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Heredia

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Zenón Echavarría
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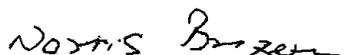

José Barrera
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Mario Jiménez
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Rafael López
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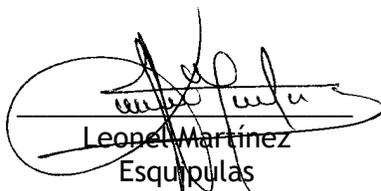

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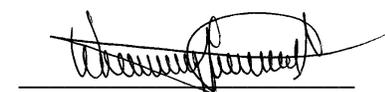

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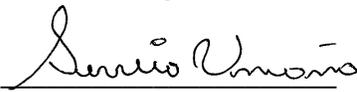

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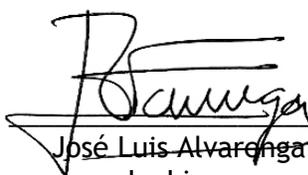

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Enrique Rodríguez
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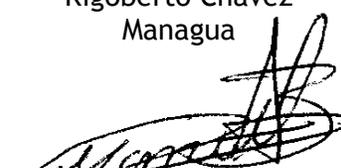

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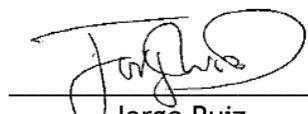

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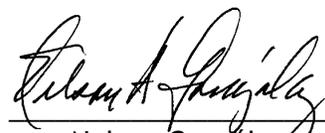

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QUOTES FROM THE MINISTRY OF WATCHMAN NEE AND WITNESS LEE

The workers should take the attitude that their work is not for their own ministry, and all the local saints should learn the lesson not to stand for anything other than the church. Simply stand for the local expression of the church because the local church, not the ministry, is the lampstand for Christ. (Witness Lee, *The Life and Way for the Practice of the Church Life*, p. 120)

All the work must be for the church, not for the workers. The ministry should be for the church; the church should never be for the ministry. We must be exceedingly clear concerning this principle. (Witness Lee, *The Vision of God's Building*, p. 175)

Eventually the ministry does not build up anything for the ministry itself. What the ministry builds up is the churches. Today [in 1986] there are over one thousand churches around the globe. In Mexico, Central America, and South America, hundreds of churches have been raised up within the last few years through the ministry, mainly through the printed publications and the audio and video tapes. (Witness Lee, *Elders' Training, Book 9: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way (1)*, p. 86) [Note: Today there are approximately four thousand local churches.]

[T]he ministry is for the local churches, not the local churches for the ministry. Regardless of how good, how spiritual, and how high one's ministry is, it still must be for the local churches. Regardless of how degraded the local churches are, they are still the lampstands. (Witness Lee, *The History of the Church and the Local Churches*, p. 104)

We must see clearly that the work is the work of the Body of Christ and that, while the Lord did divide His workers into different companies (not different organizations), their work was always on the ground of the Body. And we must recognize that every individual worker and every company [of co-workers] represents the ministry of the Body of Christ, each office held being held in the Body, and for the furtherance of the work of God. Then, and only then, can we have one ministry—the up-building of the Body of Christ. If we recognized clearly the oneness of the Body, what blessed results we should see! Wherever the principle of the oneness of the Body operates, all possibility of rivalry is ruled out. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 30: *The Normal Christian Church Life*, pp. 120-121)