

June 6, 2014

To the saints in the Lord's recovery:

Since last week, we have received many emails from saints in North America concerning a murder in China that was perpetrated by members of the "Almighty God" cult (also known as "Eastern Lightning"). These emails expressed concern because of Chinese social media reports of a statement by the Chinese government Anti-Cult Association that first aired on China Central Television (CCTV). In their statement, the Anti-Cult Association targets the saints in the local churches:

The Shouters: Also known as "the Church of God," and calling themselves the "Local Church" and the "Lord's Recovery." This group was founded in the USA in 1962 by an American Chinese named Witness Lee and gradually developed into a cultic organization with its center at "Living Stream Ministry" in the USA, with strongholds in "The Gospel Book Room" in Taiwan and Hong Kong Bible Research and Education Centre in Hong Kong, and auxiliary bases in Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines. They are spreading to various places in the world with an emphasis on infiltrating Mainland China.

Attacks of this kind against the Lord's recovery are not new. Since Watchman Nee's arrest in 1952, the Chinese government has branded him as a "counterrevolutionary," and since 1983 the Chinese government has branded Witness Lee as a cult leader and the head of "the Shouters" sect. Throughout the decades since Watchman Nee's arrest, the local churches have continuously been persecuted for political reasons using religious attacks. Thousands of believers and thousands of church leaders in China have been arrested, and many have been martyred for their faith.

In 2009 in a statement to the United States House of Representatives, Congressman Chris Smith recognized Watchman Nee's contribution to the church in China and to believers in the West:

*Christianity Today* magazine recently honored Watchman Nee as one of the 100 most influential Christians of the twentieth century. Watchman Nee died over thirty years ago but his life and work continue to influence millions of Protestant Christians in China. Today more than three thousand churches outside of China, including several hundred in the United States, look to him as one of their spiritual and theological founders...

In 1952, the Chinese government imprisoned Nee and many other Christian leaders for their faith. Nee was never released... In 1972 he died at the age of 71 in a labor farm.

On April 29<sup>th</sup> of this year, Congressman Joe Pitts made an additional statement to the House of Representatives condemning the religious and political persecution of the saints in China:

Inside mainland China the number of "hidden" believers following the ministry of Nee and Lee has continued to grow despite the Chinese government's often extreme measures to suppress and openly persecute them. Historically, members of the churches in China who appreciate the ministry of Nee and Lee have been among the most harshly persecuted. Thousands have been imprisoned, countless beaten, and many even martyred. It is estimated today that there may be two million believers and thousands of local churches in China that draw their spiritual nourishment and supply from the ministry of Nee and Lee.

Recently, reports have reached the West that Christian believers in two provinces have been imprisoned merely for possessing copies of the Recovery Version, a study Bible published by Living Stream Ministry and Taiwan Gospel Book Room, the publishing entity Lee established in Taiwan. Today Watchman Nee is still labeled as a "dangerous counterrevolutionary," and Witness Lee is officially branded as a "cult leader." The writings of both men are banned in China.

In recent years, several noted Christian leaders have affirmed the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, as well as the practice of the local churches. In 2006, at the conclusion of a two-year study of the local churches, Living Stream Ministry, and the publications of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, Fuller Theological Seminary published their findings in an official statement:

*A project to defend and confirm the New Testament ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee and the practice of the local churches.*

It is the conclusion of Fuller Theological Seminary that the teachings and practices of the local churches and its members represent the genuine, historical, biblical Christian faith in every essential aspect... We consistently discovered that when examined fairly in the light of scripture and church history, the actual teachings in question have significant biblical and historical credence. Therefore, we believe that they deserve the attention and consideration of the entire Body of Christ.

In 2009 the Christian Research Institute (CRI), headed by Hank Hanegraaff, concluded their own six-year study with an issue of the *Christian Research Journal* (CRJ) dedicated to the local churches declaring, "We Were Wrong!" In that issue, CRJ Editor-in-Chief Elliot Miller also documented the persecution of the saints in China by the Chinese government:

When the Communists came into power, severe persecution was unleashed on the LC ["Local Church"] and Nee was imprisoned in 1952, where he died twenty years later. Nee sent Lee to Taiwan to help ensure that the movement, and the New Testament truths they had "recovered," would survive.

...For Christians in America, being labeled a cult member may only result in humiliation; for Christians in Asia, it can result in persecution to an extent we never have to worry about here.

With this letter, we would like to provide the saints with accurate information and helpful resources to dispel any misunderstanding affecting new ones or gospel friends who have received false reports. In this regard, we hope the resources found at the links below will prove useful:

- *Congressional Record*—"In Recognition of Watchman Nee" [English](#) [Chinese](#)
- *Congressional Record*—"Watchman Nee and Witness Lee" [English](#) [Chinese](#)
- Statement from Fuller Theological Seminary [English](#) [Chinese](#)
- Christian Research Institute—"Concerning the Local Churches" [English](#) [Chinese](#)
- Testimonies from Respected Christian Scholars and Ministry Leaders [English](#) [Chinese](#)
- Voices from Christian Leaders inside China [Chinese](#)

Please continue to pray for the DCP work to clear up any false association of the Lord's recovery with evil cults, and please continue to pray that the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee would be freely available to all of God's people.

DCP Serving Ones