

HIDING HISTORY?

In recent years a myth has been spread on the Internet that the leadership in the Lord's recovery has systematically concealed the "real" history of the local churches. Lacking firsthand knowledge of the events in question and the objectivity to differentiate evidence and conjecture, those who have propagated this myth claim to unveil an alleged "hidden history" of the churches. A few others, mostly too young to have witnessed the events discussed or to know the people involved, have repeated the rumor that the "real history" of the local churches has been concealed. However, there is considerable documented evidence that contradicts their claims.

Early 1980s Litigations

During the early 1980s the local churches were involved in two lawsuits. One concerned the book *The MindBenders* by Jack Sparks; the other concerned the book *The God-Men* by Neil Duddy and the Spiritual Counterfeits Project (SCP). In both cases, all the major parties on both sides were deposed. After the litigations were resolved, the leadership of the local churches donated extensive legal documentation from both cases to the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB) for their Special Collections Library. The depositions, exhibits, and trial testimony are at UCSB as part of the American Religions Collection compiled by Dr. J. Gordon Melton. This was done to preserve a public record of the events and arguments involved in both cases. Rather than hide the history of these lawsuits, the local churches unilaterally made the depositions available for review.

Beyond making the depositions available at UCSB, many articles on the litigations in which local churches have been involved have been published online. Significant portions of depositions, major legal documents, and other related material are published or referenced on a website that chronicles the history of the cases. See *Contending for the Faith* as well as the article "Facts Concerning Three Libel Litigations" on this site for more information.

Daystar – A Failed Business

One largely misunderstood matter is the history of Daystar Motor Homes. The never-realized profits from the manufacture and sales of Daystar recreational vehicles were intended to support full-time workers and the acquisition of church meeting halls as the local churches spread. A small minority of members of various local churches either invested in or loaned funds to Daystar. The business failed. Regrettably, investors lost money. Those who made loans to Daystar were repaid except when the loan was explicitly forgiven by the lender. No local church was involved with the ownership or operation of Daystar.

Daystar was substantially addressed in depositions of Witness Lee, Francis Ball, Max Rapoport, and William Gilbow. Mr. Gilbow, a nonprofit expert for the accounting firm Peat Marwick International, examined the accounting procedures of Living Stream Ministry (LSM) and Daystar and found no irregularities in either content or practice. See *Facts Concerning Daystar Motor Homes* for a more detailed account of both Daystar and Mr. Gilbow's testimony. The relevant depositions are part of the public record at UCSB.

Daystar was not a significant event in the history of the local churches and has little relevance today. Daystar failed over 40 years ago. It was never a secret at any time during its short life, and its failure was well known at the time. The history of Daystar has not been hidden; there was nothing to hide. Rather, the Daystar venture was thoroughly scrutinized by opposing counsel in sworn testimony in *The Mindbenders* case more than 35 years ago, and nothing untoward was found.

Turmoils

From time to time turmoils have arisen from within the local churches. The history of these events has not been concealed but rather has been addressed through numerous publicly spoken messages that were circulated in audio and video formats and later published as books.

In the late 1980s John Ingalls led a turmoil marked by his withdrawal from the church in Anaheim. In announcing his withdrawal, he made a number of accusations. Witness Lee addressed each of these directly:

In his withdrawal from the eldership of the church in Anaheim on March 19, 1989, Brother John Ingalls charged us with a number of accusations concerning our present situation. Hence, I have the burden to

present to the saints in the Lord's recovery some truths that will blow away the cloud that has dimmed the clear vision of the Lord's recovery among us and will bring back to us a clear sky with a clear view in the recovery. These practical truths are versus some of John's dissenting accusations. (*Elders' Training, Book 10: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way (2)*, 93)

In *The Fermentation of the Present Rebellion* Witness Lee addressed the divisive events of the late 1980s instigated by Ingalls and others. This book detailed the turmoil's history of conspiracy and deceit and included the public testimonies of 28 others who were firsthand witnesses to what had taken place. On May 15, 1990, 45 local churches in California issued an open letter of quarantine concerning the turmoil caused by Ingalls and others. Between 1989 and 1993 Brother Lee published a number of books addressing both this turmoil and the principles involved, including *The Problems Causing the Turmoils in the Church Life* and *The Present Turmoil in the Lord's Recovery and the Direction of the Lord's Move Today* (many are listed on the site A Faithful Word). Rather than hiding history, the issues raised were addressed publicly in a thorough and straightforward manner.

After Brother Lee passed away in 1997, two longstanding situations of concern worsened. Both had festered for many years despite attempts by Brother Lee and others to render help to those involved. The first was the work of Titus Chu and his co-workers in the Great Lakes area. It became manifest that Titus was carrying out a divisive work that was causing confusion among the local churches and that he would not turn from his way. After many appeals, the co-workers among the local churches issued a letter of warning on October 7, 2006. This history has been publicly addressed in many venues. It has been documented in a set of 28 books published by DCP and on A Faithful Word.

The second was a similar situation primarily in South America involving the work of Dong Yu Lan. He had embarked on a divisive work with many strange, unbiblical teachings and abusive demands for subjection to his personal authority. Between January and May 2009 many local churches from Mexico, South and Central America, the Caribbean, Europe, and South Africa issued letters of warning concerning the divisive and damaging effect of Dong's work. On April 4, 2009, the co-workers in the Lord's recovery also issued a detailed letter of warning concerning the work of Dong Yu Lan. See A Faithful Witness for details of the history of this turmoil and the letters of warning.

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In 1956 Brother Lee gave messages later published in a three volume set titled *Three Aspects of the Church*. Book 2 includes three chapters titled "The History of the Lord's Move in China (1, 2, and 3)." In 1973-74 he gave a series of messages that were published as *The History of the Church and the Local Churches*. In Hong Kong and Taiwan in 1981, he gave an extensive history of the local churches in the Far East, the United States, and elsewhere, published in *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1981, Volume 2 as The History and Revelation of the Lord's Recovery*. These volumes, along with other, shorter books and chapters, address historical matters both positive—growth, spread, and revelation—and negative—turmoil, division, and opposition. We encourage the saints to read these accounts.

In the Lord's recovery we do not hide our history. Rather, our practice is to examine our history, learn the lessons that can be derived from that history, and pass those lessons on to succeeding generations. In doing so, exposing division, wrongdoing, false teachings, and injurious practices among former workers is unavoidable. This is consistent with the practice of the Lord's servants in the New Testament (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17; 4:14; 3 John 9). At the same time, when we relate this history, we endeavor to avoid exposing sensitive information of a private nature that would damage individual members, ex-members, opposers, or their families. It is not the local churches that are guilty of hiding history. Rather, there is a concerted effort by a small number of Internet critics to rewrite the history of the local churches to suit their own ends. For them, conclusions can be drawn without facts, contrary evidence can be ignored, and innuendo and rumor can be substituted for veracity. It is this distorted and often fabricated "history" that they claim we are "hiding."

Those who take in the false narrative of unaccountable Internet critics will be brought into darkness and ultimately division. Those who read the factual accounts of these events published by LSM, the co-workers, and Defense & Confirmation Project will touch light and be strengthened in their faith in the Lord and their realization of His recovery.