

MORMONISM & TRUTH

Joseph Smith's Secretary's Diaries Embarass Church

In the last issue of the *Messenger* we reported that

For 140 years the Mormon Church has been suppressing the Nauvoo diaries of Joseph Smith's secretary William Clayton. These diaries have been hidden in the vault of the First Presidency. Recently, however, quotations from these diaries leaked out, and this has caused great consternation among the General authorities and officials at Brigham Young University.

The *Seventh East Press*, a student newspaper published just off the Brigham Young University campus, published the following:

A BYU graduate student has accused a member of a bishopric of stealing copies of materials which the student obtained from the vault of the First Presidency.

In doing research in LDS Church history, Andrew F. Ehat, . . . obtained permission to examine the restricted Nauvoo diaries of William Clayton and make notes. He gave a copy of his notes to BYU religion instructor Lyndon Cook, who kept them in his campus office. The notes were taken without permission and photocopied by . . . a member of a bishopric which uses Cook's office. (*Seventh East Press*, January 18, 1982)

A religion instructor at BYU borrowed photocopies of these notes and subsequently lent them to a student who made five more copies. When Ehat discovered what had happened he became very upset and according to witnesses he declared, "If this gets out it could destroy the Church" (*Ibid.*). Ehat tried desperately to get all of the copies back. He went to "BYU security and the Provo Police Department," but neither of these organizations were able to help him. BYU President Jeffery Holland "appointed Vice-president Noel Reynolds to investigate the matter," but in spite of all the pressure "various individuals" continued to circulate and make copies of the material. Many copies have now been spread by the Mormon "underground" (a group composed mostly of liberal Mormon scholars) to different parts of the United States. Most of those who received copies were very careful to see that they did not fall into the hands of critics of the Church. The *Seventh East Press* reported that one man who refused to give up his copy of Ehat's notes said that "he would never give information to anti-Mormons." Finally, several months after Mormon scholars began circulating the typed excerpts, we were given access to a copy of them. These notes certainly tend to confirm our research concerning the deceitful way plural marriage was introduced by the Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith. For instance, in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 206-207, we quote Emily Dow Partridge (a faithful Mormon) as telling how Joseph Smith deceived his wife Emma:

. . . the Prophet Joseph and his wife Emma offered us a home in their family. . . . I was married to Joseph Smith on the 4th of March 1843, . . . My sister Eliza was also married to Joseph a few days later. This was done without the knowledge of Emma Smith. Two months afterward she consented to give her husband two wives, providing he would give her the privilege of choosing them. She accordingly chose my sister Eliza and myself, and to save family trouble brother Joseph thought it best to have another ceremony performed. Accordingly on the 11th of May, 1843, we



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were sealed to Joseph Smith a second time, in Emma's presence. . . . From that very hour, however, Emma was our bitter enemy . . . things went from bad to worse until we were obligated to leave the house and find another home. (*Historical Record*, page 240)

In William Clayton's diary, he tells of Joseph Smith having a problem with Emma over the Partridge sisters. He indicates that Joseph deceived her by telling her he would "relinquish all" for her sake when he really didn't intend to "relinquish any thing":

Wednesday 16 . . . This A.M. J. [Joseph] told me that since E. [Emma] came back fro St Louis she had resisted the P. [Priesthood?] in toto & he had to tell her he would relinquish all for her sake. She said she would [*sic*] given him E. & E. P [Emily and Eliza Partridge] but he knew if he took them she would pitch on him & obtain a divorce & leave him. He however told me that he should not relinquish any thing O. God deliver thy servant from iniquity and bondage. (William Clayton's Diary, August 16, 1843, typed excerpts, page 24)

On May 24, 1843, (page 43) William Clayton told of Joseph Smith holding the door shut when he was in a room with one of the Partridge girls and that this made Emma very "irritated":

Prest. stated to me that had had a little trouble with sis E. he was asking E. Partridge concerning Jackson conduct during Prest. absence & E came up stairs. he shut to the door not knowing who it was and held it. She came to the door & called Eliza 4 times & tried to force open the door. Prest. opened it & told her the cause &c. She seemed much irritated. He says Jackson is rotten hearted.

In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 245, we show that while Joseph Smith secretly lived plural marriage, he denied it publicly and even published a statement that "Hiram Brown" had been "cut off from the church" for "preaching polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines, . . ." (*Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, page 423). According to William Clayton, Joseph Smith was willing to go so far as to initiate a fake excommunication to cover up the practice of polygamy:

Thursday 19. . . . Prest. J. . . . began to tell me that E. was turned quite friendly & kind. she had been anointed & he also had been a. K. He said that it was her advice that I should keep M [Clayton's plural wife Margaret] at home and it was also his council. Says he just keep her at home and brook it and if they raise trouble about it and bring you before me I will give you an awful scourging & probably cut you off from the church and then I will baptise you & set you ahead as good as ever. (*Ibid.*, October 19, 1843)

William Clayton's diaries paint a very unattractive picture of polygamy in Nauvoo. Clayton was continually having family problems because of plural marriage. He tells, for instance, of a problem he encountered when he wanted to sleep with both of his wives at the same time:

Thursday 24. . . . At night I asked mother if M might sleep with Ruth & me she appeared very rebellious & would not consent but said we might do as we had a mind. (*Ibid.*, August 24, 1843, page 25)

Clayton does not indicate how his wives felt about this situation, but it is obvious from the diary that Margaret was really in love with another man. She had been engaged to this man but had been counseled to marry Clayton instead. Clayton felt very bad and asked Joseph Smith if he had done wrong in taking Margaret away from the man she really loved. Smith "answered no you have

a right to get all you can" (*Ibid.*, August 11, 1843). Joseph Smith really seemed to believe in that philosophy. At one time he and Clayton were both interested in Lydia, the sister of two of Clayton's wives. He claimed, therefore, that God gave him a special revelation showing it would be wrong for Clayton to have her:

Friday 15th. . . . Prest. J. told me he had lately had a new item of law revealed to him in relation to myself. He said the Lord had revealed to him that a man could only take 2 of a family except by express revelation and as I had said I intended to take Lydia he made this known for my benefit. to have more than two in a family was apt to cause wrangles and trouble. He finally asked if I would not give L to him I said I would so far as I had any thing to do in it. He requested me to talk to her. (*Ibid.*, page 25)

William Clayton's diaries certainly throw light on the bad relationship Joseph Smith had with his wife Emma. Most of the problems seemed to stem from the doctrine of plural marriage. Clayton records the following under the date of July 12, 1843:

Wednesday 12th This A.M. I wrote a Revelation consisting of 10 pages on the order of the priesthood, showing the designs in Moses, Abraham, David and Solomon having many wives & concubines &c. After it was wrote Presto. Joseph & Hyrum presented it and read it to E. who said she did not believe a word of it and appeared very rebellious. (*Ibid.*, page 20)

On August 21, 1843, Emma was "vexed and angry" because of correspondence she found between Joseph and one of his plural wives. Two days later she treated Joseph so badly that "he had to use harsh measures to put a stop to her abuse but finally succeeded."

Joseph Smith feared that Emma would become involved in the same type of conduct in which he was engaged. At one time he even suspected William Clayton of using "familiarity" with her:

Monday 29 This A.M. prest J. told me that he felt as though I was not treating him exactly right & asked if I had used any familiarity with E. I told him by no means & explained to his satisfaction. (*Ibid.*, May 29, 1843, page 44)

On June 23, 1843, William Clayton recorded this strange entry in his diary:

Friday June 23rd. This A.M. Prest J. took me and conversed considerable concerning some delicate matters. said [a mysterious character appears at this point in the manuscript which Mormon scholars interpret as "Emma"] wanted to lay a snare for me. He told me last night of this and said he had felt troubled. He said [the character representing "Emma" appears again at this point] had treated him coldly & badly since I came . . . and he knew she was disposed to be revenged on him for some things she thought that if he would indulge himself she would too. He cautioned me very kindly for which I felt thankful. He said Thompson professed great friendship for him but he gave way to temptation & he had to die. Also bro Knight he gave him one but he went to loose conduct and he could not save him. Also B.Y. [Brigham Young] had transgressed his covenant & he pled with the Lord to spare him this end & he did so, other wise he would have died. B. denied having transgressed He said if I would do right by him & abide his council he would save my life while he lived. (pages 19-20)

Taken as a whole Ehat's extracts from William Clayton's diaries cast early Mormonism in a very bad light. In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 245, we quoted the Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe as saying: "The Church ever operates in full light. There is no secrecy about its doctrine, aim, or work." Widtsoe further proclaimed that "From the beginning of its history the

Church . . . has fought half-truth and untruth.” William Clayton’s diaries certainly show that Apostle Widtsoe was incorrect in these statements. The Church was certainly not operating in “full light” and there was a great deal of “secrecy about its doctrine.” Furthermore, Clayton makes it clear that Joseph Smith used “untruth” as a tool to advance his work. Not only was he deceiving the outside world, but he was deceiving his own wife and other members of the Church.

Instead of coming to grips with these matters, Mormon Church leaders have been engaged in a cover-up. They kept the Clayton diaries locked in a safe for 140 years, and after extracts got out, they began to implement very repressive measures to see that no more sensitive material comes to light. In the last issue of the *Messenger* we gave a report concerning how the Mormon leaders clamped down on the Historical Department and even scrapped the 16-volume sesquicentennial history of the Church because it turned out to be too revealing. James L. Clayton, a historian from the University of Utah, became very disturbed about these matters, and in a speech delivered February 25, 1982, he protested:

More recently, indeed, just within the past few days, I understand that the archives of the LDS Church have been closed to all research in the diaries, the letter books and other sensitive materials of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve back to the 1830s—diaries and letters long open to and currently being used by scholars. Many projects of considerable worth are now stymied or will be finished with incomplete sources. The release of Leonard J. Arrington as Church Historian—the most significant Mormon historian since B. H. Roberts, in my judgment; the apparent refusal to complete already signed contracts with other historians working on a multi-volume history of the church; the movement of the Historical Department from the main source of manuscripts at Church Headquarters in Salt Lake City to BYU, these events raise serious questions regarding the nature and direction of historical enquiry on Mormonism.

The Apostles Ezra Taft Benson and Boyd K. Packer have been warning Mormon historians not to probe too deeply into the past and to concentrate on printing only material which is favorable to the Church. D. Michael Quinn, assistant professor of history at the Church’s Brigham Young University, felt that these Apostles had gone too far. In an emotionally charged speech, he commented that “the Mormon history of benignly angelic Church leaders apparently advocated by Elders Benson and Packer would border on idolatry” (*On Being a Mormon Historian*, pages 18-19).

Although Dr. Quinn has been the most courageous in opposing the suppressive moves of Church leaders, many Mormon scholars feel the same way. Just after we published the last issue of the *Messenger*, a researcher who had previously sided against us, wrote us a letter in which he stated:

Thank you for sending me your newest edition of the *Messenger*. As things are now, there is absolutely no reason to even tint the truth on Mormon history. What the Church has now done, only proves; “that the truth is not in us.” The Mormon Church has been the only religious organization that has showed me the “Truth, the Life and the Way.” But that only goes as far as the first principles of the gospel. I cannot ignore, nor can I condone the actions that have taken place in the Church Historians Office. . . . This whole matter of coverups and lies in the historians office has made me very ill. I wish the Church leaders could feel the pain that is inside me. . . .

As a small boy my father taught me that truth and right were always worth fighting for. . . . But as things are now, I am a soldier without his sword of truth. And without the sword of truth, I am defenseless. I have no position from which to stand. Honesty makes it so . . . truth has delt a fearful blow.

In any case, because the extracts from Clayton’s diaries throw so much light on early Mormonism we have published them under the title, *Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered*. For a complete treatment of the subject of Mormonism and truth we recommend our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* ♦

Apostle Attacks Personal Relationship With Christ

At a Brigham Young University Devotional held March 2, 1982, the Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie delivered a very significant message. In this speech, Apostle McConkie emphatically declared that members of the Mormon Church “should not strive for a special and personal relationship with Christ.” McConkie maintained that he was expounding the “doctrine of the Church” on this subject and said that “you have never heard one of the First Presidency or the Twelve . . . advocate this excessive zeal that calls for gaining a so-called special and personal relationship with Christ.” McConkie also admonished that “everyone who is sound spiritually and who has the guidance of the Holy Spirit will believe my words and follow my counsel.” In concluding his remarks, Apostle McConkie set himself up as one of the greatest living authorities on Christ: “It just may be that I have preached more sermons, taught more doctrine, and written more words about the Lord Jesus Christ than any man now living.”

Bruce R. McConkie seemed to be especially upset with “a current and unwise book” which he does not identify by name. It is believed, however, that he was referring to the book *What It Means To Know Christ*, by George Pace, an associate professor at BYU. In the Foreword to this book, Dr. Pace maintained that people should “center their lives in Christ and . . . develop their own personal relationship with Him.” From an article published in the *Seventh East Press*, an independent student newspaper which is published just off campus of BYU, it would appear that George Pace has a number of supporters:

. . . we have been surprised at the overwhelming number of traditionally conservative, orthodox, sustaining LDS members who have expressed criticism of Elder McConkie’s presentation. People who we would never have suspected to say an unkind word about their delinquent home teacher have gone out of the way to state their distress over Elder McConkie’s “uncharitable rebuke” of George Pace, abrasive style of presentation, unneeded mocking of other religion’s rituals and saints, dogmatic approach, and condescending tone. . . . Many of the offended saints seem to be looking beyond the mark of learning truth from a great gospel scholar in the Church by going out of their way to find fault. Indeed some seem to be trying to position themselves so that Elder McConkie would be sure to knock off the chip on their shoulder. (*Seventh East Press*, March 14, 1982, p. 8)

The speech delivered on March 2, 1982, was not Apostle McConkie’s first attack on those who stress a personal relationship with Christ. According to the *Seventh East Press*, November 18, 1981, he had warned students against this doctrine a few months before:

On the weekend of October 31, 1981 Elder Bruce R. McConkie and other General Authorities presided over the 14 BYU Stake Conference. . . .

Elder McConkie counseled students against praying on dates, saying that this practice develops a relationship that should only exist in marriages. . . .

Elder McConkie believes that the Second Coming of Christ will not take place during his lifetime, nor the lifetime of his

children, and maybe not during the lifetime of his grandchildren. He said that there is too much to be done before the Savior's return can take place . . . as we measure time, it is a long way off.

He also spoke on a subject he said had been going around the church—developing a personal relationship with Christ. He said that those who preach this doctrine, that is, “take it as a goal in life and focus on it or single it out” become “unbalanced.” He discussed the fact that we worship God the Father in the name of Christ through the Holy Ghost, and that we don't pick out one member of the Godhead to have a “special” relationship with, but should seek to obtain the spirit.

While Bruce R. McConkie claims to be one of the greatest authorities on the life of Christ, he is certainly out of step with the teachings of the Bible. From beginning to end the New Testament stresses the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In Matthew 11:28 we find Jesus Himself saying: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” This same theme continues right into the book of Revelation where Jesus says: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelations 3:20). The Apostle Paul certainly taught a close personal relationship with Christ in his epistles. For instance, in Philippians 3:8-10 we read:

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

Apostle McConkie's teachings are not only out of harmony with the Bible, but they are contrary to the Book of Mormon as well. For example, McConkie claims that “We worship the Father and him only and no one else. We do not worship the Son . . .” He also warns that those who claim a personal relationship with Christ “often begin to pray directly to Christ because of some special friendship they feel has been developed. . . . Our prayers are addressed to the Father, and to him only.” The Book of Mormon, however, has the ancient Nephites both worshipping and praying to Jesus:

. . . they did cry out with one accord, saying:

Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him. (3 Nephi 11:16-17)

And behold, they began to pray; and they did pray unto Jesus, calling him their Lord and their God. (3 Nephi 19:18)

And when Jesus had spoken these words he came again unto his disciples; and behold they did pray steadfastly, without ceasing, unto him; and he did smile upon them again; and behold they were white, even as Jesus. (3 Nephi 19:30)

Actually, Apostle McConkie's recent statement is only the last step on a long pathway leading away from Biblical teachings about Christ. This process began during Joseph Smith's lifetime, although the Book of Mormon itself emphasized the importance of Jesus. The Book of Mormon, in fact, teaches that Jesus is God Himself manifest in the flesh (see Mosiah 15:1-5).

Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, departed even further from Biblical doctrine in his teachings concerning the Godhead. For a complete treatment of the changing conception of God in Mormon theology we recommend our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 143-178.

In any case, we have found Apostle McConkie's speech to be so extraordinary that we have reproduced it in its entirety. Our photographic reproduction of this speech was made directly from a copy acquired from McConkie's office. It is entitled, *Our Relationship With The Lord*. ♦

Danite Entry Crossed Out in Smith's Diary

Although the Mormon leaders suppressed Joseph Smith's private diaries for almost a century and a half, in the 1970s copies leaked out. In 1979 we were able to print his diaries for 1832-36, and just recently we completed his 1838-39 diaries. While these diaries are certainly not as sensational as the ones written in the 1840s, there is one entry that throws some important light on the secret band known as the Danites. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, gave this information concerning the Danites:

In the spring of 1838, the heads of the church and many of the members had gone deep into error and blindness. . . . In June, 1838, at Far West, Mo., a secret organization was formed, Doctor Avarad being put in as the leader of the band; a certain oath was to be administered to all the brethren to bind them to support the heads of the church in everything they should teach. All who refused to take this oath were considered dissenters from the church, and certain things were to be done concerning these dissenters, by Dr. Avarad's secret band. I make no farther statements now; but suffice it to say that my persecutions, for trying to show them their errors, became of such a nature that I had to leave the Latter Day Saints; . . . (*An Address To All Believers In Christ*, Richmond, Missouri, 1887, pages 27-28)

David Whitmer's brother, John Whitmer (who was also a witness to the Book of Mormon) confirmed the allegation that there was a dangerous band formed in Far West to drive out dissenters:

Joseph Smith, Jr., S. Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith moved their families to this place, Far West, in the spring of 1838. As soon as they came here, they began to enforce their new organized plan, which caused dissensions and difficulties, threatenings and even murders. Smith called a council of the leaders together, in which council he stated that any person who said a word against the heads of the Church, should be driven over these prairies as a chased deer by a pack of hounds, having an illusion to the Gideonites, as they were termed, to justify themselves in their wicked designs. Thus on the 19th of June, 1838, they preached a sermon called the salt sermon, in which these Gideonites understood that they should drive the dissenters, as they termed those who believed not in their secret bands, in fornication, adultery or midnight machinations. . . . They had threatened us, to kill us, if we did not make restitutions to them, by upholding them in their wicked purposes and designs. . . .

But to our great astonishment, when we were on our way home from Liberty, Clay County, we met the families of Oliver Cowdery and L.E. Johnson, whom they had driven from their homes, and robbed them of all their goods, save clothing, bedding, etc.

While we were gone Jo. and Rigdon and their band of Gaditons kept up a guard, and watched our houses; and abused our families; and threatened them, if they were not gone by morning, they would be drove out, and threatened our lives, if they ever saw us in Far West. (*John Whitmer's History*, page 22)

The Mormon writer William E. Berrett admitted that

Such a band as the “Danites” did exist, as historian’s affirm; . . . The organization had been for the purpose of plundering and murdering the enemies of the Saints. (*The Restored Church*, 1956, pages 197-98)

Although Berrett conceded that the Danite Band did exist, and that it was for the purpose of “plundering and murdering the enemies of the Saints,” he claimed that the Mormon leaders were not responsible for it being formed. According to the *History of the Church*, Joseph Smith made some very contradictory statements about this organization. On one occasion he said that it was organized but claimed that he did not have any knowledge of it at the time (see *History of the Church*, vol. 3, pages 178-182). On another occasion, however, Joseph Smith passed the whole thing off by saying, “The Danite system alluded to by Norton never had any existence” (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, page 165). Fortunately for the cause of truth, in 1838 Joseph Smith had his scribe George W. Robinson keep a diary which was called, “The Scriptorium Book of Joseph Smith Jr President of The Church of Jesus Christ, of Latterday Saints in all the world.” This diary contains a very important entry under the date of July 27, 1838 which has been crossed out. H. Michael Marquardt, who made the transcription of the diary, worked very carefully with this portion of the record and was finally able to decipher most of the words that had been crossed out. He discovered that the entry related to the Danite Band. It not only confirmed the existence of the band but said it was organized for the purpose of making things right and cleansing the Church:

. . . according to the order of the Danites we have a company of Danites in these times, to put to right . . . that which is not right, and to cleanse the Church of every great evil. . .

Mr. Marquardt points out that the account in Joseph Smith’s “Scriptory Book” agrees with other evidence about the Danites. For instance, he quotes Reed Peck as saying: “I heard Avard, on one occasion, say that the Danites were to consecrate their surplus property, and to come in by tens to do so. . .” Joseph Smith’s “Scriptory Book” agrees when it says that the Danites “came up to consecrate, by companies of tens, . . .”

While it is extremely interesting that Joseph Smith’s “Scriptory Book” would contain an entry concerning the Danites, the whole matter is made even more intriguing by the fact that there has been an attempt to obliterate the entry. Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church* relies on the “Scriptory Book” for the entries of July 26 and 28, but the entry for July 27—i.e., the portion concerning the Danites—has been omitted. We have included a photograph of the portion of the diary which was crossed out in our new publication, *Joseph Smith’s 1838-39 Diaries*. This book sells for \$2.00 a copy.

For more information about the Danites see our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 428-450.

A PROPHET EMERITUS?

Joseph Smith became President of the Mormon Church before he reached his thirtieth birthday and Brigham Young, the second President, took over the reigns of leadership while he was still in his forties. The early Mormon Church was led by a group of men who were relatively young. In fact, seven of the original Twelve Apostles were only in their twenties when they were called to that ministry—four of them were only twenty-three years old. Today, things have completely changed. The Church is now led by a group of men who are very old. David O. McKay, the ninth President,

lived to be ninety-six. The tenth President, Joseph Fielding Smith was ninety-five when he passed away. Harold B. Lee, the eleventh President, died at the age of seventy-four. The current President, Spencer W. Kimball, is now eighty-seven. He is in very poor health and is hardly able to function, yet he is still sustained as the “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” of the Mormon Church. It seems that there is no retirement for the Prophet nor for the members of the Council of the Twelve—Apostle LeGrand Richards is now ninety-six years old. A man could be completely senile and still be sustained as the “Living Prophet.”

While the Apostles and the First Presidency will not retire from their positions, they have placed seven members of the First Quorum of the Seventy on emeritus status since 1978. This means, of course, that these men have been “retired or honorably discharged from active duty because of age, infirmity, or long service, but retained on the rolls.”

The most interesting case of placing a Church leader on emeritus status occurred on October 6, 1979, when the Church Patriarch was released. In the afternoon session of general conference, President N. Eldon Tanner announced:

. . . we now designate Elder Eldred G. Smith as a Patriarch Emeritus, which means that he is honorably relieved of all duties and responsibilities pertaining to the office of Patriarch to the Church. (*The Ensign*, November 1979, page 18)

Since the Mormon leaders did not appoint anyone to replace Eldred G. Smith, it appears that they may be abolishing the office of Patriarch to the Church. This is an office which was supposed to be established by revelation. Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the tenth President of the Church said that “The office of Patriarch to the Church is one of two hereditary offices in the Church, . . .” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 3, page 160). President Smith felt that this office would “last forever in the Church”:

It has always been understood, and so the revelations declare, that this office is hereditary. . . .

The statement that the duty of Hyrum Smith was to the Church forever, because of his family, evidently conveys the thought that he would succeed to the office of Patriarch and that it should continue in his posterity to the end of time, for, surely, it would have to continue in this way to last forever in the Church upon the earth among mortal men. (*Ibid.*, page 164)

In any case, the following question comes to mind: If the Mormon Church can have a “Patriarch Emeritus,” why can’t it have a “Prophet Emeritus”? ♦

Kimball’s Journal Confirms Oath of Vengeance

We have recently printed one of Heber C. Kimball’s journals by the photomechanical method. Davis Bitton, formerly Assistant LDS Church Historian, described this journal as follows:

5. “The Journal of Heber C. Kimball.” Restricted volume. Entries from 21 November 1845 to 7 January 1846. Much of this volume concerned with temple ceremonies, including names of those who received ordinances in the Nauvoo Temple.

In this journal Heber C. Kimball, a well-known Mormon Apostle, gave some very important information concerning the “Oath of Vengeance” — an oath which used to be taken as part of the temple ritual. Although some members of the Mormon Church

denied the existence of such an oath, just after the turn of the century the "Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate" investigated the matter and concluded:

In the protest signed and verified by the oath of Mr. Leilich it is claimed that Mr. Smoot has taken an oath as an apostle of the Mormon Church which is of such a nature as to render him incompetent to hold the office of Senator. From the testimony taken it appears that Mr. Smoot has taken an obligation which is prescribed by the Mormon Church and administered to those who go through a ceremony known as "taking the endowments." It was testified by a number of witnesses who were examined during the investigation that one part of this obligation is expressed in substantially these words:

You and each of you do covenant and promise that you will pray and never cease to pray Almighty God to avenge the blood of the prophets upon this nation, and that you will teach the same to your children and to your children's children unto the third and fourth generation.

.....

The fact that an oath of vengeance is part of the endowment ceremonies and the nature and character of such oath was judicially determined in the third judicial court of Utah in the year 1889 in the matter of the application of John Moore and others to become citizens of the United States. . . .

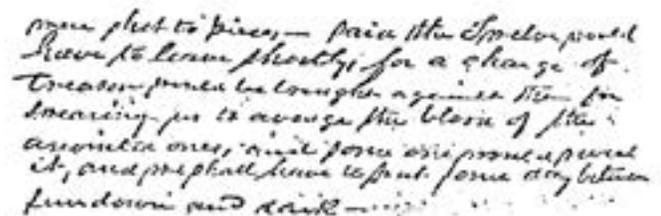
The obligation hereinbefore set forth is an oath of disloyalty to the Government which the rules of the Mormon Church require, or at least encourage, every member of that organization to take.

It is in harmony with the views and conduct of the leaders of the Mormon people in former days, when they openly defied the Government of the United States, and is also in harmony with the conduct of those who give the law to the Mormon Church today in their defiant disregard of the laws against polygamy and polygamous cohabitation. It may be that many of those who take this obligation do so without realizing its treasonable import; but the fact that the first presidency and twelve apostles retain an obligation of that nature in the ceremonies of the church shows that at heart they are hostile to this nation and disloyal to its Government. (*The Reed Smoot Case*, vol. 4, pages 495-497)

Joseph Smith's brother William publicly charged that the "Oath of Vengeance" was administered in Nauvoo. Heber C. Kimball's journal confirms this accusation. On December 21, 1845, we find this report of remarks made in the temple:

Elder Kimball . . . said the Twelve would have to leave shortly, for a charge of treason would be brought against them far swearing us to avenge the blood of the anointed ones, and some one would reveal it, and we shall have to part some day between sundown and dark— . . . I have covenanted, and never will rest nor my posterity after me until those men who killed Joseph & Hyrum have been wiped out of the earth. (*Heber C. Kimball's Journal*, December 21, 1845)

Below is a photograph of the portion of Heber C. Kimball's Journal where he tells of the "Oath of Vengeance."



As we have mentioned before, some Mormon apologists have maintained that there was no "Oath of Vengeance" in the temple ceremony. The journal of Heber C. Kimball, however, completely destroys their argument. The "Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon" also makes it very plain that there was such an oath. Under the date of December 6, 1889, the Apostle Cannon recorded the following in his diary:

About 4:30 p.m. this meeting adjourned and was followed by a meeting of Presidents Woodruff, Cannon and Smith and Bros. Lyman and Grant. . . . In speaking of the recent examination before Judge Anderson Father said that he understood when he had his endowments in Nauvoo that he took an oath against the murderers of the Prophet Joseph as well as other prophets, and if he had ever met any of those who had taken a hand in that massacre he would undoubtedly have attempted to avenge the blood of the martyrs. The Prophet charged Stephen Markham to avenge his blood should he be slain: . . . ("Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon," December 6, 1889, page 205)

The Apostle Cannon went on to relate that Joseph F. Smith, who later became the sixth President of the Mormon Church, was about to murder a man with his pocket knife if he even expressed approval of Joseph Smith's death:

. . . Bro. Joseph F. Smith was traveling some years ago near Carthage when he met a man who said he had just arrived five minutes too late to see the Smiths killed. Instantly a dark cloud seemed to overshadow Bro. Smith and he asked how this man looked upon the deed. Bro. S. was oppressed by a most horrible feeling as he waited for a reply. After a brief pause the man answered, "Just as I have always looked upon it—that it was a d—d cold-blooded murder." The cloud immediately lifted from Bro. Smith and he found that he had his open pocket knife grasped in his hand in his pocket, and he believes that had this man given his approval to that murder of the prophets he would have immediately struck him to the heart. (*Ibid.*, pages 205-206)

In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 475, we gave additional information on the "Oath of Vengeance" and speculated as to when it was actually removed from the temple ceremony. Recently we obtained a photograph of a letter written by George F. Richards to the President of the St. George Temple which shows that all vestiges of the oath had been removed by 1927:

We have the Temple ordinances written into the books for the Presidents of Temples and are preparing the Part books and will get them to you in the near future, or at conference time.

At request of President Grant we have already adopted some of the changes decided upon, and it will be in order for you to do the same.

In sealing for the dead wether one or both be dead, omit the kissing. Omit from the prayer in the circles all reference to avenging the blood of the Prophets.

Omit from the ordinance and lecture all reference to retribution. This last change can be made with a day's notice to those taking the parts that contain such reference.

This letter is written with the approval of the Presidency. (Letter from George F. Richards to the President of the St. George Temple, dated February 15, 1927)

The Reed Smoot Case, the diaries of Heber C. Kimball and Abraham H. Cannon and the letter of George F. Richards prove beyond all doubt that the Church had an "Oath of Vengeance" which finally had to be removed from the temple ceremony.

Those who are interested in collecting rare Mormon documents may be interested in obtaining our new publication, *Heber C. Kimball's Journal, November 21, 1845 to January 7, 1846*. This book does not contain a transcript but does have photographs of this 370-page document. While this journal is marked as "Very Confidential" and has been "Restricted" by Church leaders, it is composed mostly of lists of names of people who participated in the temple rituals. It does tell of dances, meetings and other activities held in the Nauvoo Temple but is certainly not as sensational as many of the other journals written by early Mormons. ♦

ABSOLUTELY NO MIDDLE GROUND

Since we began our work in the early 1960s, a great deal of historical information has come to light which shows that Mormonism is not based upon a solid foundation. The General Authorities of the Church could not deal with the problems and called upon the historians hoping that they could provide some answers. Leonard J. Arrington was called to be Church Historian and a whole crew of professionally trained people began working with the documents. Unfortunately for the Church, however, the results were disastrous. As the historians began their work, they saw that the problems were much deeper than anyone had ever realized. Instead of providing additional evidence for the Church, the original foundational documents proved to be very embarrassing. Some of the prominent historians, therefore, began to lose faith in the Church and to search for some type of "middle ground." At first the Mormon leaders seemed to be oblivious to what was happening, but as time went on they began to comprehend the gravity of the situation. As we indicated earlier, they finally suppressed the 16-volume sesquicentennial history, moved "the Historical Department from the main source of manuscripts at Church Headquarters in Salt Lake City to BYU," and released Leonard J. Arrington as Church Historian. The Church leaders apparently realize that Dr. Arrington is too prominent a man to publicly take issue with, but they hope that his influence will gradually be dissolved. On March 14, 1982, the *Seventh East Press* printed the following:

Along one hall on the second floor [of] the Church Historical Department (LDS Church Office Building) hang portraits of LDS Church Historians from the beginning down to Elder G. Homer Durham. Interestingly, however, there is no portrait of Leonard J. Arrington.

The same issue of *Seventh East Press* reported:

In a recent lecture . . . James L. Clayton . . . announced that Dr. Leonard J. Arrington has been dismissed as LDS Church Historian . . .

Reliable sources report that Elder G. Homer Durham, member of the presidency of the First Quorum of Seventies, has been set apart as the new Church Historian.

Although the Church has made no official announcement, the *Sunstone Review* for May 1982, asserted that "Elder G. Homer Durham . . . was called and set apart as Church Historian on February 2." If this report is true, it is certainly a very strange procedure. Dr. Arrington was publicly "sustained in the April 1972 General Conference" (*Ibid.*), but no announcement was ever made by the Church that he had been released. Durham, on the other hand, apparently replaced Arrington without being publicly sustained in the April 1982 conference. This seems to be a rather underhanded way of removing Dr. Arrington from his position.

In any case, in "a draft of the first chapter of a manuscript for a book entitled *No Middle Ground*," Professor Louis C. Midgley, of Brigham Young University, has accused some Mormon historians of "caving in" on the vital issues:

I wish to show that what is behind the writing of at least some recent Mormon history is a rash and unnecessary caving in on crucial issues. . . . I would prefer to see Mormon history written with an eye to building and defending the Kingdom of God; it is a grave mistake for a Mormon to do otherwise. ("The Question of Faith and History," pages 1 and 2)

Professor Midgley maintains that it is impossible for Mormon leaders to take a neutral position with regard to Joseph Smith:

Mormon historians who attempt to account for Joseph and the restoration with one of the "countless options" of Professor Marty's middle ground between genuine prophet and fraud will have invoked theories that necessarily entail a problematic competing "religious" faith . . . from the point of view of the Mormon faithful . . . any explanation of Joseph's prophetic claims that does not accept him as a genuine prophet has in effect rejected him as a fraud: there is no real middle ground between those alternatives. All of the "countless options" available to explain what might have caused Joseph to claim prophetic revelations other than God end up being just different versions of the fraud thesis. To substitute illusion, delusion or madness for conscious fraud (or charlatan) is obviously destructive to the Mormon faith. For the Mormon historian to toy with one of these "countless options" is therefore tantamount to rejecting Joseph's prophetic claims. To explain Joseph's revelations (for example, the Book of Mormon, Book of Moses, Book of Abraham) as mere products of culture is an act of treason; it would amount to handing over the sacred texts to the enemy by treating these texts as somehow merely the invention of Joseph Smith. . . . The gentiles . . . have now offered what they believe is a choice different than that of prophet or fraud: they propose a choice between prophet and product of culture. As I will show, these product-of-culture explanations make it next to impossible for the historian, or those influenced by his explanations, to take the gospel seriously; they are also only nice ways of saying fraud.

The Mormon position has always been to argue that on the decisive question of the veracity of Joseph's prophetic revelations there are only two alternatives: he was either a genuine prophet or a base fraud. . . .

But are Mormon historians now really tempted by the New Chicago Argument? Are Mormons really interested in reaching such an accommodation with secular and gentile historians? Are Mormon historians now busy grasping for a middle ground between prophet and fraud in their accounts of Joseph Smith and the Restored Gospel? The answer is yes! . . . Certain Mormon historians—the New Mormon Apologists, armed with the Chicago Argument—are busy attempting to discover a safe middle ground—a kind of neutral territory—somewhere between divine revelation on the one hand and outrageous fraud on the other; . . .

Clearly one would have no interest in such detachment or neutrality unless one began with a premise that in effect denied the possibility that the Saints have had access to genuine prophetic revelation. . . . the history of the Mormon community would be, in the hands of the New Apologists, only the story of a people guided by an illusion, and the telling of that story would have as its end the utter disillusionment of that people. . . .

The real challenge to the Restored Gospel is not with the findings; or theories of some special science, but with history . . . Is it not with historical questions or with an examination of historical documents or artifacts where the attack on the Restored Gospel always begins and where the greatest difficulties arise? The pressure of such questions has taken its toll on Mormon historians. The suggestion is currently being advanced, sometimes in a rather

cautious and indirect manner by the New Mormon Apologists, that it is now both necessary and even quite proper to abandon the old notions such as the belief that the Book of Mormon and the special revelations of Joseph Smith are genuinely prophetic. . . . some have been quick to assume that the battle for the capital has been decided and that Mormon faith has finally lost the war. . . . The New Mormon Apologists have thus striven to show that there is nothing in the Book of Mormon or the early teachings of Joseph Smith that was not wholly typical of the sectarian religious background of New England and western New York. . . . Those who now toy with various so-called middle-ground alternative explanations of the restoration have probably not worked out the implications of their endeavor or sensed the grave risks involved in their project—that seems to be the common problem . . . There is no way around the fundamental controversy about his [Smith's] claims to some neutral or middle ground somewhere between the traditional alternatives of prophet or fraud. A neutral or presumably "objective" explanation would not be a genuinely higher ground. To attempt such a maneuver is to enter the darkness of a night in which all cats are grey. (*Ibid.*, pages 16-19, 21-23 and 28)

Davis Bitton, who used to serve as Assistant Church Historian under Leonard Arrington, commented on Midgley's paper. Midgley responded by accusing Professor Bitton of defending the idea of a "middle ground between prophet and fraud." He went on to stress that

The substantive arguments that propose to be "middle-ground" explanations have, up to this point, all turned out to be merely rather obvious variations on the fraud thesis. ("The San Antonio Discussion On Mormon Historiography," page 8)

Jan Shipps also commented on Midgley's paper. In reply, Midgley said that

Professor Shipps' passion to defend the "club members" in the Mormon History Association from serious criticism has led her into the land of murky distinctions. . . . (*Ibid.*, page 13)

On page 10 of the same paper, Midgley claimed that Shipps' "hero is none other than Leonard J. Arrington"—the man who was recently released from his position as Church Historian. Midgley went to say that "Hugh Nibley is a hero and Fawn Brodie a villain in my plot. I think that Jan Shipps is somehow offended because

she senses that my hero is not Leonard J. Arrington. I must have violated a club rule." (*Ibid.*, page 15)

While Professor Midgley finds it easy to condemn Mormon historians, he probably does not realize the serious problems they are facing. Most of them would probably be elated to find evidence that Joseph Smith was a true prophet. The documents, however, point in the opposite direction. Under these circumstances, we can understand why Mormon historians would try to find a neutral position. Midgley, of course, is correct in saying there is really no middle ground. As the Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt once said,

The Book of Mormon . . . must be either true or false. If true, it is one of the most important messages ever sent from God. . . . If false, it is one of the most cunning, wicked, bold, deep-laid impositions ever palmed upon the world, calculated to deceive and ruin millions. . . . (*Orson Pratt's Works*, "Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon," 1851, page 1)

Although some of the historians now agree with us that the Book of Mormon was not really translated from gold plates, they feel that we have been too harsh on Joseph Smith in our publications. Actually, the question of whether Joseph Smith was self-deceived, a deliberate impostor or a combination of both is one that is very difficult to answer. We do not pretend to know what was going on in his mind, and therefore we do not claim to have the final solution to this problem. If the historians prefer to believe that Joseph Smith was a "well-meaning but mistaken" man, we will not spend a great deal of time arguing about the matter. The important thing is whether Smith actually had gold plates written by the ancient Nephites. If he did not, then the whole foundation of Mormonism collapses.

In our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we deal at great length with the question of the origin of Mormonism. Through quotations and photographs from hundreds of printed sources and original documents, we prove conclusively that Mormonism is based on a sandy foundation. The 1972 edition of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* was proclaimed by Wesley P. Walters to be "the most definitive work in print on the fallacies of Mormonism." We feel that the new 1982 enlarged edition is even better, and we urge all those who have not yet obtained a copy to do so. The price for *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* is \$11.95 (\$14.95 for hardback). Mail orders please include 10% for postage and handling.

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