

CHURCH FIGHTS BACK!

MORMON LEADERS VERY UPSET BY CHARGES OF COVER-UP

Three major books have now been written regarding Mark Hofmann's cunning plan to deceive Mormon leaders and document experts with forged documents and the murders he subsequently committed to cover up the crimes. The first book to appear, written by Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts was entitled, *Salamander—The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders*. The second book, *The Mormon Murders—A True Story of Greed, Forgery, Deceit and Death*, was written by Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith. The last book, *A Gathering of Saints—A True Story of Money, Murder and Deceit*, was penned by Robert Lindsey.

These books have generated interest in the work of Utah Lighthouse Ministry and have brought enquiries from different parts of the United States. The treatment given our work in the three books has, in fact, caused some controversy. For instance, in a review of the book by Sillitoe and Roberts, Roger D. Launius suggested that one of its "deficiencies" was that it "glossed over" our work on the Salamander letter:

Salamander . . . still leaves many unanswered questions . . . Why was the Mormon historical community so unwilling to accept the facts of the case and only reluctantly acknowledged that Hofmann was a murderer and that his documents were fakes? I suspect it has something to do with an unwillingness to admit that Hofmann had tricked them. . . . Why, also, were those



President Gordon B. Hinckley

who raised questions about the documents, particularly anti-Mormon Jerold [*sic*] Tanner when he pointedly challenged the authenticity of the "Salamander Letter" before the bombings, shouted down so vehemently by historians? Why also was Jerold Tanner's contribution to determining the "Salamander Letter" forgery completely glossed over in this study? (*The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal*, vol. 8, 1988, p. 82)

While it is probably true that noted Mormon historians like Leonard Arrington, Dean Jessee or Marvin Hill would have received more attention if they had done the same work on the Hofmann documents, Sillitoe and Roberts do mention that we "expressed doubts about the letter's authenticity" in the *Salt Lake City Messenger* long before the bombings. They also state that "Hofmann found Tanner's challenge to the letter a serious one," confronted "Sandra Tanner" and told her, "You, of all people, should not be attacking this letter." (*Salamander*, pp. 287-288).

In spite of the fact that Roger D. Launius feels that *Salamander* does not devote enough material to certain subjects, he believes that, "All in all, it is an exceptionally capable, intriguing, entertaining, and significant study of one of the most bizarre episodes in Mormon history." (*Ibid.*, p. 79) We would certainly have to agree that *Salamander* is an excellent book. Although it is written by Mormon scholars, it is objective in its treatment of the church.

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While Sillitoe and Roberts were criticized for not giving enough attention to our work, Naifeh and Smith have been castigated for paying too much attention to it. David J. Whittaker, Curator, Archives of the Mormon Experience at the Brigham Young University Library, wrote the following in “an abridged version of a longer review essay that will appear in *BYU Studies*”:

The second volume, *The Mormon Murders*, was released in August 1988. Of the three volume[s] here under consideration, it is clearly the most disappointing. In reading it I was reminded of Peter Bart’s *Thy Kingdom Come* (1981), a novel which . . . presented a picture of the Mormon Church concerned only with money and power, with nothing else really mattering. Truth was a convenient commodity treasured more by the publisher of an anti-Mormon newsletter than the Church leaders. . . .

Naifeh and Smith manage to work into their narrative most of the traditional anti-Mormon themes . . . But their knowledge of LDS history is woefully inadequate. In fact, it is just awful . . . they see conspiracies everywhere, and like Peter Bart they are sure the Church is behind all of them. Jerald Tanner, like Hiram Cobb of Bart’s novel, is their real hero—he seeks and sees the truth, while the Church just wants to suppress it. . . .

If *Mormon Murders* has any merit, it is the focus it gives to the case by seeing the whole affair through the eyes of Jim Bell and Ken Farnsworth, the investigators for the Salt Lake Police Department. Much of the detail regarding the case no doubt came from these two individuals, as well as from Gerry D’Elia, and that perspective is of value, even though it tends toward cynicism. Thus the volume does have insight into the inner workings of the police investigation . . . There are insights in this volume, but the overt anti-Mormon bias of the authors, combined with their arrogance and ignorance, must be seen as seriously distorting their perspective and judgment.

Although we are certainly pleased that Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith gave a great deal of attention to our work, we have chosen not to handle their book. It does seem to be rather harsh on some people and contains many unnecessary expletives. Also, we would like to see more evidence before jumping to some of the conclusions they arrived at. Nevertheless, we agree with David J. Whittaker, that *The Mormon Murders* gives some insights which are not found in the other books.

The report concerning our work which is found in this book seems to be generally accurate. There is one matter, however, that should be corrected. On page 144 of *The Mormon Murders*, the following appears regarding the Salamander letter: “In early March, Jerald and Sandra Tanner blew the story open in their monthly newsletter, the *Salt Lake City Messenger*. They called the Harris letter, of which they had seen excerpts, ‘one of the greatest evidences against the divine origin of the Book of Mormon.’” This statement would lead the reader to believe that we were endorsing the Salamander letter in our first publication concerning the matter. The facts are as follows: Our public

criticism of the Hofmann documents began in March 1984—seventeen months before the bombings—when we demonstrated that there were significant parallels between E. D. Howe’s book, *Mormonism Unveiled*, and the Salamander letter. We noted that these parallels were strong enough to cause us to question the authenticity of the letter (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, March 1984, pp. 1, 4). About three years after we wrote that statement, Mark Hofmann confessed that he did, in fact, use the Howe book, *Mormonism Unveiled*, as the basis for the Salamander letter.

The quotation found in *The Mormon Murders* is out of context because it omits the first five words of a sentence and conveys a different meaning than we had intended. We did not call the Salamander letter “one of the greatest evidences against the divine origin of the Book of Mormon.” What we did say was as follows:

At the outset we should state that we have some **reservations concerning the authenticity of the letter**, and at the present time we are not prepared to say that it was actually penned by Martin Harris. The serious implications of this whole matter, however, cry out for discussion. **If the letter is authentic**, it is one of the greatest evidences against the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. If, on the other hand, **it is a forgery, it needs to be exposed as such** so that millions of people will not be misled [*sic*]. We will **give the reasons for our skepticism** as we proceed with this article. . . . Although the average person would have a difficult time forging these things [i.e., the handwriting, postal mark and amount of postage paid] there are probably a number of people who could do the job.

Because they apparently did not understand the true message of the March 1984 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* (i.e., that the Salamander letter was a very questionable document), Naifeh and Smith made another error. They assumed that “Jerald Tanner” later changed his position and decided the letter “was probably a fake.” Actually, Jerald did not have a change of position. He was telling people that the Salamander letter was probably a forgery as early as February 1984 and became increasingly adamant in that opinion as time passed. On August 22, 1984, we published *The Money-Digging Letters: A Preliminary Report*. This pamphlet presented even stronger evidence of plagiarism in the Salamander letter and other evidence against its authenticity. It also made it clear that Utah Lighthouse Ministry was investigating all of Hofmann’s major finds and called upon him to reveal the source of these discoveries. It was, in fact, this publication that caused a confrontation between Sandra and Hofmann at the time of the Sunstone Symposium in August 1984.

The third book concerning the Hofmann affair was authored by Robert Lindsey who was a veteran reporter for the *New York Times* and also wrote the best-sellers, *The Falcon and the Snowman* and *The Flight of the Falcon*. We first became acquainted with Robert Lindsey when he was writing a story concerning Mark Hofmann for the *Times*. He had been talking to investigators concerning the bombings,

and although they could not give him too much information at that time, they suggested that he would find the correct theory of the case printed in the pages of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*. Consequently, Mr. Lindsey gave us some good publicity in an article he published:

Court documents indicate that some prosecutors . . . believe Mr. Hofmann's goal was not only to obtain money from the church through the sale of the documents but also to establish enough credibility that he could shape the world's perception of Mormonism.

This view is shared by a man here who was the first to suggest that Mr. Hofmann was forging his documents. He is Jerald Tanner, a former Mormon who heads the Utah Lighthouse Ministry, which for decades has been challenging the truth of much of Mormon doctrine. . . . In an interview, Mr. Tanner said he decided . . . that the Hofmann documents might be forgeries, even though some of them . . . supported his own iconoclastic views of Mormonism.

In a newsletter that he publishes with his wife, Sandra, Mr. Tanner began raising questions about their authenticity, in some cases comparing the texts with known Mormon writings.

But if senior Mormon officials were aware of his warnings, they apparently paid little attention. Several of the church's highest officials have acknowledged negotiating to acquire documents from Mr. Hofmann until the day of the first two bombings. (*New York Times*, February 16, 1986)

Robert Lindsey became very interested in our work and devoted a good deal of space to it in *A Gathering of Saints*. In this book, which will be the basis for a major motion picture, Mr. Lindsey not only tells of our research on the Hofmann documents but goes on to make a statement which has caused some consternation among Mormon scholars:

Perhaps only Utah in the last half of the twentieth century could have produced someone like Michael Marquardt or Jerald Tanner. . . .

Tanner was a machinist turned publisher whose historical research, probably more than that of anyone else except Fawn Brodie, had given birth to what was being called "the new Mormon history." (*A Gathering of Saints*, page 128)

Nothing could be much more offensive to Mormon historians, who are trying to overcome the displeasure of the church hierarchy, than to suggest that we had any role in the so-called New Mormon History (i.e., truthful and open Mormon history). Davis Bitton, who served as Assistant Church Historian under Leonard J. Arrington, felt that the fact that a Mormon scholar had linked us with the New Mormon History was an important factor in Arrington losing his position as Church Historian and the "decline" of the Historical Division:

It did not help that the decade of our existence was a time when Jerald and Sandra Tanner were publishing a variety of

works . . . Those ex-Mormons had begun their publishing activity before the Historian's Division was ever created, and they would continue it long after. But the two activities were going on simultaneously. . . . We did not sympathize with the Tanners. But in a very vague and general way one can imagine how "the troubles of our Church history" could be seen in terms of both fronts. **I was dismayed** when an honor's thesis produced by a University of Utah student **lumped the work of the historians of the History Division . . . together with the publications of the Tanners.** For him, it was all "the New Mormon History." **Guilt by association is a devastating thing, as we discovered.** (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn 1983, p. 17)

Although David J. Whittaker gave Robert Lindsey very good marks, he felt that he had to respond to what he felt was Lindsey's ignorance concerning "the New Mormon history":

The third volume, *A Gathering of Saints*, appeared in September 1988. In many ways it is the best of the three volumes. As a story, it reads better than [than?] the other two, and on balance, it presents a more complete account of all the aspects of the case than do the others. Lacking the vituperative approach of *The Mormon Murders*, it moves deftly through the story with insight and compassion, and it is well organized. . . . In general, the volume is much more even-handed in dealing with the role of the LDS Church in the Hofmann story. . . .

Of course there are problems: Lindsey has not done his homework on the Danites (p. 204); and **no serious Mormon historian would agree with his comments that Jerald Tanner (following Fawn Brodie) gave birth to the "New Mormon history"** (p. 128). But these flaws can probably be credited to his status as an outsider to Mormon country and culture.

Although we do not agree with Whittaker's statement that Lindsey "has not done his homework on the Danites," and will leave the reader to decide on the merits of his statement on New Mormon History, we have to agree with most all of his comments concerning *A Gathering of Saints*. Almost everyone seems to agree that it is an excellent book. In this revealing study of Mark Hofmann's murders and his attempt to blackmail the Mormon Church, Mr. Lindsey deals with such subjects as: the conflicts between Mormon scholars and the church hierarchy with regard to how church history should be handled, the so-called Mormon underground, attempts to cover up evidence in the investigation, conflicts between investigators and church security, and the attempt to suppress embarrassing documents. This book includes revealing extracts from the diaries of Steven Christensen, Kathy Sheets, Ted Cannon and others, plus important new information from a recent interview Hofmann had with one of the investigators.

It is evident that the Mormon hierarchy is very concerned about the Hofmann books, plans for a CBS miniseries and a 20th Century Fox movie concerning the scandal. In the Calendar Section of the *Los Angeles Times*, Peter H. Brown wrote the following:

The Apostles of the Mormon Church . . . are casting wary eyes toward Hollywood, hoping for the best but fearing the worst from a trio of productions built around the notorious so-called Mormon Murders. . . .

Most sources within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints interviewed by Calendar acknowledged that their hierarchy is bristling over the very existence of the projects. . . . According to two books on the case, the church hierarchy allegedly tried to dampen the subsequent investigation into church involvement, even to suppress evidence. . . .

Next up is “The Mormon Murders,” an \$8-million, four-hour miniseries . . . It is set to start filming in Utah the second week in January. It will be based partially upon the Steven Naifeh-Gregory White Smith book . . .

The Fox film, “A Gathering of Saints,” is based on the Robert Lindsey book . . . the film may begin shooting in late spring or early summer. . . .

Quite naturally, Mormon authorities have taken a guarded attitude to the film projects. “We are aware of them and are watching very carefully,” said Richard P. Lindsay, director of communications for the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints. “But it **sounds like a return to the ‘Mormon bashing’** themes of the 1800s when the church was pilloried for sedition and anarchy.”

Other sources within the Mormon media establishment . . . said the church already has begun a battle against what it believes is the **most serious attack against the church** since the polygamy controversy at the turn of the century. . . .

The church has embarked on a massive study of the books and news articles in an attempt to assemble a master list of errors, misquotes and exaggerations. “**Our response to all the allegations made against the church will be made public in about 60 days,**” Lindsay said.

The proposed miniseries has generated special fear and loathing—fear of the global consequences of a billion-viewer audience and loathing for the book that spawned it. Lindsay characterized it as “written with such a venom and such a bias that it is an insult to fair-minded Americans.” (*Los Angeles Times*, Calendar Section, September 18, 1988)

We have been told by Mormons that the reason the Mormon Church leaders do not respond to our books is because they do not believe it is Christian to debate with their critics. We have always believed, however, that the real reason is that they know our case is very strong and that it would do more harm to the church to discuss the issues than to hold their tongue. That the deathlike silent treatment they have given us has been motivated more by an inability to demonstrate error rather than Christian principles is evident by the fact that they have publicly attacked the Naifeh-Smith book. The Mormon Church’s newspaper, *Deseret News*, October 16, 1988, denounced the book in no uncertain terms:

Mormon Murders contains “scurrilous descriptions, accusations and willful misrepresentations of the actions and motives of leaders of the LDS Church,” says an LDS Church spokesman.

The malignant meanness of the book is compounded because of its frequent misstatements, attributed to unidentified sources, . . .

Officials of the LDS Church seldom respond publicly to criticism or its leaders. But [Richard P.] Lindsay calls the attack by *Mormon Murders* a return to the Mormon-bashing days . . .

While we certainly do not consider ourselves apologists for *The Mormon Murders*, we feel that the Mormon Church hierarchy must accept some of the blame for the tone of the book. The fact that church leaders alienated a number of the investigators who worked on the Hofmann case with their secrecy and lack of cooperation must have made a very negative impression on the authors who interviewed them.

In one of the critical articles which appeared in the *Deseret News*, October 16, 1988, Naifeh and Smith are accused of lying with regard to the church’s cooperation with regard to the investigation:

Book: “*The church tried to dampen the investigation into Hofmann and to suppress evidence.*”

Lindsay: “The church cooperated fully with federal, state and local law enforcement officials, responding to every inquiry and request. All 48 documents acquired from Hofmann were made available to law enforcement officials.”

Unfortunately for the church, the evidence clearly shows that some church leaders were very uncooperative with investigators and seemed to be far more interested in protecting the image of the church. Although they may differ on some details, all three of the books (written by five different authors) agree that this was the case. Since the authors of these three books worked independently of one another and interviewed the same investigators, one is forced to the conclusion that this was the opinion of those who investigated the case. Naifeh and Smith wrote:

Ward’s first action was to help arrange to have a key piece of evidence shipped out of state. By the time the police department knew enough to ask the Church for the so-called Salamander Letter, it was already gone—off to the FBI’s laboratories in Washington, D. C., for a long and very confidential analysis. When the county attorney’s office requested other Hofmann documents, the Church refused to hand them over. Why would they push one sensitive document into the FBI’s hands almost immediately after the bombing and fight to keep other documents out of police hands for weeks? Church spokesmen said they didn’t trust local law enforcement.

But they *could* trust the heavily Mormon FBI, which worked hand-in-glove with Brent Ward. (*The Mormon Murders*, pp. 295-296)

The real purpose of the meeting [about the documents] was made clear. The Church wanted to know what Throckmorton and Flynn intended to do to their prized possessions. As they pointed out repeatedly, this was an unprecedented situation. They were being asked to open the Church vault to *outsiders*, to people beyond their

bureaucratic control, to a non-Mormon, no less. Not that they trusted Throckmorton any better. . . .

The Church's dilemma was clear. As later described by a Mormon in the county attorney's office, "It was damaging enough to think that the documents were genuine and that the first leader of the Church might have been nothing more than a con man who duped the faithful. But it would be even *more* damaging if the documents turned out to be forgeries, and the *current* leaders of the Church had been duped by a con man."

Caught between a rock and a hard place, the Church reached for its favorite defense: secrecy. They agreed to let Throckmorton and Flynn look at the documents, but they were determined that absolutely no one else should see them.

That meant that under no circumstances could the two examiners make photocopies, or copy down the contents of the documents.

It meant the documents could not leave the Church premises. Throckmorton and Flynn would be given a conference room in the historical library. The locks would be changed, and they would be given the only two keys.

It meant that they would have to enter and leave the room together. Neither one would be allowed to stay in the room alone.

It meant that the documents would be brought to them every morning in a locked briefcase and returned every night to The Vault, where the briefcase would be handcuffed to a pipe so that it could not be opened again until the next day.

The Church lawyer who was doing most of the talking repeated again and again: "We don't want these divulged. We don't want the writing disseminated." . . . "I have to protect Hinckley," he kept saying. "I have to protect the Church." (*Ibid.*, pp. 340-341)

While the statement about U. S. Attorney Brent Ward turning the Salamander letter over to the FBI to keep it out of the hands of local investigators seems to be incorrect (the *Deseret News*, October 22, 1985, reported that Salt Lake City Police Chief E. L. (Bud) Willoughby joined with Ward in asking "the FBI to conduct the tests" and a Salt Lake City detective has confirmed to us that local authorities wanted the FBI to test the letter), it is clear from the other books that the church did not want to make the other documents available to document examiners. In Robert Lindsey's book we find the following:

When [Salt Lake County Attorney] Ted Cannon pressed the church to let his investigators look at the originals of those that were still in Salt Lake City, a lawyer for the church said that would be impossible, because some of the documents were extremely confidential and the church did not want to risk having them made public.

Cannon said that if the church declined to provide the documents voluntarily, he would subpoena them—and indeed, he subsequently did so. But, to head off a court fight over the subpoena, Cannon surrendered to a demand by the church's lawyers to keep the substance of the documents a secret.

"The content and meaning and interpretations to be placed upon what is iterated within the documents,"

Cannon wrote to Wilford Kirton, the church's lawyer, "is either immaterial or of secondary concern as far as this investigation is concerned. . . . every reasonable measure will be employed to secure not only the documents themselves, **but the contents thereof**, from scrutiny or discussion by anyone outside the authorized investigative team. In **no case** will any member of the investigative team **be permitted to discuss, describe or characterize the contents of the said documents**, or any of them, to media or indeed any interested party whatsoever. . . ."

Cannon agreed to let church officials maintain a sign-in/sign-out log identifying everyone who examined the documents and agreed with the church's demands that members of his staff would have to turn over to the church all notes, photocopies, photographs and negatives made during examination of the documents. Cannon ended his letter with an expression of thanks for the church's cooperation, a clause that brought snickers from many of those in the War Room [i.e., the room where investigators met to discuss strategy in the Hofmann investigation]. . . . George Throckmorton wanted a sample of Harris's writing that had never been handled by Hofmann . . .

After being issued a subpoena, the church had released to Throckmorton and Flynn what it said were all of the documents it had acquired from Hofmann since 1980, including some that it had previously kept secret.

When the First Presidency's Vault yielded the letter presented to Gordon Hinckley by Hofmann in which Thomas Bullock accused Brigham Young of having tried to destroy the Blessing of Joseph Smith III, it caught those in the War Room by surprise.

"*What else are they hiding?*" Michael George demanded. "None of the church historians I've talked to—Don Schmidt, Leonard Arrington, Dean Jessee—even knew this existed. *They've never heard of it.* What else do they have? Who knows what's in the First Presidency's Vault?" (*A Gathering of Saints*, pp. 268, 269, 273, 274)

That the LDS Church would fight to keep its secret historical documents from coming to light is not news to readers of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*. In the issue for November 1983 we reported that after a Mormon scholar filed a suit against us to prevent us from printing extracts from the diaries of Joseph Smith's private secretary, William Clayton, we subpoenaed the President of the Mormon Church and/or his representative to appear with the original Clayton diaries to give testimony on our behalf. On July 22, 1983, attorneys for the Corporation of the President of the Church filed a motion which asked that our subpoena "be quashed." On September 6 a hearing was held before Judge A. Sherman Christensen. The Church's attorney, Wilford W. Kirton, vigorously opposed the subpoena. He argued:

Now, this is a matter of some serious moment as far as we are concerned . . . suddenly we find ourselves being subpoenaed and come in to court and make public certain writings, which up to the present time remain unpublished. . . . I represent an organization that is very concerned about parties attempting to frame issues through which its own private materials may be discoverable. It has no desire to submit to the scrutiny of the parties.

Although we won the suit in a higher court, the Mormon Judge who originally ruled against us also denied our request to examine the original documents. In the case where the County Attorney's Office was seeking documents from the church, it seems rather obvious that they would have eventually obtained the documents. While it is doubtful that church leaders would have actually dared to risk the bad publicity of fighting the County Attorney's Office in court over the documents, if they contested the subpoena, it would have caused a delay in the investigation. Since the County Attorney's Office felt that Mark Hofmann was a vicious murderer who might kill again or escape, it apparently felt pressured into striking a special deal with the church. This whole matter seems deplorable. If we had had a number of Hofmann documents which investigators wished to see, we doubt very much they would make a secrecy agreement with us and come to a special room on our premises to examine the documents.

Mormon writers Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts also confirmed the fact that the church was uncooperative with regard to the documents:

George Throckmorton worked feverishly to discover whether forgery was a glue that could hold the case together. First, he needed the documents that Hofmann had sold to the LDS church and to other collectors. He would begin with photographs, then move to the originals, he told Dean Jessee.

Jessee shook his head. The investigation was unpopular among historians. "Leonard won't let you have them," he guessed.

Throckmorton telephoned Leonard Arrington [formerly Church Historian] . . . He knew Arrington had been widely quoted in the press stating that at least five of the Mormon documents Hofmann had discovered were definitely authentic. . . . Throckmorton introduced himself and told Arrington he needed photographs of the Hofmann documents. Arrington said he could offer no help, except to suggest that Throckmorton pursue some other line of inquiry. "You're on the wrong track," he advised, as he ended the conversation.

Throckmorton next tried to get the photographs from employees in the church's archives at the Church Office Building. For a time, prosecutors and investigators had taken their questions directly to the archives staff, but a memo had instructed employees that any contact with investigators or the press should be cleared through church attorneys. Legally, the prosecutors could not fault the procedure, but, practically, **the added red tape slowed the investigation.**

A **number of meetings** took place in December between church and CAO [County Attorney's Office] representatives to discuss the examination of certain documents in the church's possession. Church attorney Wilford Kirton was leery of allowing investigators access to the papers. "We cannot divulge the content of these documents," he insisted during one meeting. "**It's my responsibility to protect these documents and President Hinckley.**" . . . Finally, Ted Cannon, who had spoken with church attorneys frequently, called Kirton and told him in no uncertain terms that, one way or another, the investigators had to examine church documents. . . .

"Slap them with a subpoena," D'Elia suggested repeatedly when the bombings team met. . . .

Finally, all parties agreed to meet . . . on December 5, including Apostle Oaks. . . . Stott explained that they needed the originals of the documents Dean Jessee said came from Hofmann. . . .

After some discussion, Oaks agreed. "We need to cooperate," he said. "We need to be entirely open in this matter, because the church has nothing to hide. We need a subpoena for these documents. Then History will show that the church cooperated." . . . Oaks and Kirton presented a paper for Throckmorton to sign, stating that his notes, test results, and photographs would be returned to the church. Afterwards, however, Throckmorton told Stott he would not agree to sign anything like that and the subject was dropped. Oaks, his legal experience showing, valued documentation. He requested a letter from the CAO stating that the church had cooperated fully with the investigators. (*Salamander*, pp. 119-120)

Since Linda Sillitoe, who coauthored *Salamander* with Allen Roberts, covered the Hofmann story for the church's *Deseret News* before she resigned to write the book, it is obvious that the fact that the church fought to keep the documents out of the hands of the investigators is not the invention of vicious anti-Mormon writers.

On pages 301-303 of the book, *The Mormon Murders*, we find these accusations:

The day after the third bombing, The Word came down from the offices of the First Presidency.

It was quick, but not quick enough. . . . before the edict filtered down . . . Detective John Foster. . . . visited Martell Bird [the head of LDS Church Security] . . . He was following up on Hofmann's statement . . . that he was being tailed by Church Security . . .

Bird denied the story adamantly. . . . When Foster brought him a list of all the owners of trucks resembling Hofmann's description, Bird pulled out the Church employee records and cross-checked them with Foster's list. . . . The lead turned out to be a dry hole, but Foster was impressed with Bird's cooperativeness.

Like the way he offered the information about President Hinckley's meeting with Mark Hofmann . . . less than two weeks before the bombings. . . . He considered the meeting "insignificant."

Foster didn't. . . . He found it strange that a man who supposedly had no involvement with the Church would be visiting its President at seven in the morning . . .

"I was curious about it myself," Bird admitted when Foster pressed him. "So I went and asked President Hinckley about it. President Hinckley told me it was a guy named Mark Hofmann. 'He came to tell me about some people who had transcripts of the conference agenda,' he said." . . . they are supposed to remain secret until officially released.

Bird continued: "Hofmann was here to tell President Hinckley that somebody had copies of the transcripts and was about to let them out." Bird said he had checked the Church Administration Building log and that Mark Hofmann had indeed paid a visit to President Hinckley at the unusually early hour of seven.

When Foster told him about it, Ken Farnsworth was astonished that nobody had bothered to inform the police about the meeting—a meeting that might be crucial to understanding the pressures on Hofmann prior to the bombings. . . .

The next day, The Word came down.

Foster found that out when he officially requested copies of the Church Administration Building log . . . “I’d like to get a copy of that sign-in sheet,” he said, “to show that Mark was there on that day.”

Martell Bird called back a few minutes later. “It wasn’t that day. I was mistaken about the day.” He said it was the latter part of September. He offered to provide a photocopy of the sign-in sheet for the *right* day.

But when Foster went to pick up the photocopy, every entry except the one relating to Hofmann **had been whited out**. The day-timer had been copied, then expurgated, then copied again, giving the police no way to determine if relevant entries had been whited out along with irrelevant ones.

When he asked for a photocopy of the sheet for October 4, the date originally mentioned, Bird refused. His attitude had completely changed. Instead of eager and cooperative, he had become cool, suspicious, and recalcitrant. Foster recognized the signs. “Somebody’s told him to shut up, or told him that he shouldn’t have ever said anything about it in the first place.”

Although we do not remember reading about this incident in the other books, an investigator has confirmed to us that there was a question with regard to a meeting between President Gordon B. Hinckley and Mark Hofmann which took place sometime between seven and eight o’clock in the morning. He also revealed that the church was requested to provide a photocopy of another page from the Church Administration Building log. The photocopy which was provided contained Mark Hofmann’s name, but the names of other people who were in the building on that day had been deleted! That the Mormon Church would find it necessary to hide such information from the police is certainly strange. We would expect that type of reaction from the CIA or the FBI, but to have a church which proclaims that it operates “in full light” with “no secrecy about its doctrine, aim, or purpose” behave in such a manner makes one rather curious as to what is really going on. It seems even more unusual that there was no attempt to force the Church leaders to produce the original log. While there may not have been anything else of importance in the log, the fact that material was deleted would make one wonder if Hofmann met with Hinckley more than once in one day or if other important figures in the case were in Hinckley’s office that day. The entire log book should have been subpoenaed and thoroughly examined for all meetings between Hinckley and Hofmann as well as others who were in any way associated with Hofmann’s document deals. We seriously doubt that other people in Salt Lake City would have received the preferential treatment which the LDS leaders received in the Hofmann investigation.

While we have no reason to believe that the Mormon leaders had any prior knowledge concerning the bombings,

they found themselves in a very unusual predicament. They were at that very time deeply involved in a very secret operation with Mark Hofmann. Hofmann had convinced them that there was a collection of documents known as the “McLellin collection” which was supposed to contain documents about Joseph Smith and early Mormonism that would prove very embarrassing to the church if their contents were revealed to the public. In reality, of course, there was no such collection. Nevertheless, the Mormon leaders were taken in by Hofmann’s story and felt that he was helping them keep this collection out of the hands of the enemies of the church. Hofmann was to sell this collection to a Mormon mission president by the name of David E. Sorenson for \$185,000. Sorenson was to hold the collection for some time and then secretly donate it to the church. While Mormon officials knew that they were engaging in a clandestine operation with the express purpose of covering up Mormon history, there seems to have been nothing illegal about the matter.

Unfortunately for the church, however, the McLellin collection turned out to be the key investigators needed to solve the murders. Because Hofmann had no real collection to turn over at the appointed day, he felt it was necessary to plant the bomb that killed Steven Christensen, the man who was to validate the collection. This, of course, would give him an excuse to delay the meeting so that he would not have to produce the collection on that day.

It seems, therefore, that the Mormon leaders and the investigators were on a collision course from the day of the bombings. Church officials felt that in order to prevent embarrassment to the church they had to remain as quiet as possible about the McLellin collection and the role Hofmann, Christensen and Sorenson were playing in its suppression. The investigators, on the other hand, needed this very information to solve the murder case. Although the Mormon leaders’ main concern seems to have been to protect the church, they ended up obstructing the investigation, wasting the valuable time of investigators and, consequently, delaying the arrest of the murderer.

At the time the police began their investigation, the Mormon prophet Spencer W. Kimball was very old and near death and Gordon B. Hinckley seems to have been the acting president of the church. According to Naifeh and Smith, when investigators interviewed Hinckley, they did not feel that he told the truth:

On December 9, Farnsworth interviewed Gordon B. Hinckley. . . .

Duffy Diamond, the sergeant of Homicide . . . picked Ken Farnsworth for the job. He was, to all appearances, a good Mormon . . . The county attorney’s office sent Mike George . . . Hinckley had invited the Church’s lawyer, Wilford Kirton, to join them. . . .

Not surprisingly, the interview produced no revelations. Hinckley’s memory had not improved one jot since the press conference in October. If anything, the controversy had driven details right out of his head. So many truly *important* things to worry about . . .

Hinckley went on to review his contacts with Hofmann, from the Anthon Transcript to the Kinderhook plates. And, oh, yes, there was something called the McLellin Collection, but he had told Hofmann to take care of Al Rust before he would talk about it. That was the last he could remember hearing about it.

And what about Steve Christensen?

After the press conference at which Hinckley had said he hardly knew Christensen, the police and prosecutors had been flooded with calls from Steve's friends—good, upstanding members of the Church, even a bishop—who said that wasn't true. They were confused and angry. Someone like Hofmann might have exaggerated his relationship with Hinckley, but not Christensen.

Hinckley sighed, clearly signaling his exasperation with answering the same questions again and again. He had met with Steve Christensen one time only, on April 12, 1985, when Mr. Christensen donated the Martin Harris letter to the Church. In other words, for the third time, "I don't know him." . . .

When they came out of the building, one of the investigators said under his breath, "Why that lying [expletive deleted]." Without blinking, Farnsworth and the FBI man nodded their heads in agreement. George was startled. *He* was the non-Mormon.

Down at the department, Farnsworth capped the interview and repeated their assessment of Hinckley. Duffy Diamond agreed. "Those guys think they're dealing with a bunch of dumbbells," he fulminated. (*The Mormon Murders*, pp. 305-308)

The account of this interview given by the Mormon writers Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts does not mention "the FBI man" as being present. Detective Farnsworth, likewise, says that no one from the FBI was present during that particular interview. Nevertheless, Sillitoe and Roberts confirm that the investigators did **not** believe that Hinckley was leveling with them and were very upset about the matter:

"Can you describe to us your contacts with Steven Christensen?"

"The only time Christensen was in my office was on April 12, 1985, when he donated the Martin Harris letter."

Despite the note of finality in Hinckley's voice, the investigators continued to press for more information about Christensen. . . . They tried another tack. "When did you hear that the McLellin collection was controversial?"

"I'm not aware that it was controversial. I don't remember hearing that.

"Do you have journals or a daytimer that might refresh your memory on some of these points that are so important to the investigation?"

"No, I don't have anything that would help you. . . .

The journal question was only one dead end in the interview. Afterwards, **Mike George left Hinckley's office unexpectedly angry. When he interviewed a bandit he expected lies**, not when he interviewed a respected citizen and church leader. He soon realized, however, that his anger was simple—**his fellow investigators, born and raised Mormons, were furious.** . . .

Later that month George interviewed several of Christensen's business associates . . . As he questioned,

he heard Hinckley's name mentioned frequently. One man said that Christensen had been pulled from a meeting by a call from Hinckley. A week later, another call to an associate's office had come from Hinckley's secretary before Christensen arrived. When Christensen came in, he returned the call, then left immediately. That incident had occurred within a week of the bombings. (*Salamander*, pp. 128-130)

On pages 90-91 of the same book, Sillitoe and Roberts commented concerning the church's press conference:

Most disturbed by the press conference were some of Steven Christensen's close friends and family members. Hinckley's and Oaks's statements indicated that both had far more contact with Hofmann—an accused murderer—than with Christensen, his alleged victim. Those near to Christensen that autumn knew that he had rearranged his last months and weeks around the McLellin deal when calls and meetings with church leaders had been frequent. Good Mormons all, Christensen's mourners tried to believe that the church leaders' statements held literally to the truth. . . . the overall impression, they felt, misled the public about Christensen's activity and intent in the months before he died. If there was some reason for this disassociation, why didn't an explanation—even a private one—come with it?

Investigators also gave Robert Lindsey the impression that Hinckley and other church leaders did not cooperate with their probe of the Hofmann affair:

Although the church informed the press it was cooperating with the investigation, many of the investigators and prosecutors working on the case told a different story when they returned to their offices each night.

When detectives arrived for an interview, church leaders often opened the meeting by inquiring if they were members of the church or, as they were leaving, handed them a hymnal or other publication. Senior church officials refused to meet with the homicide investigators several times unless an FBI agent who was a returned Mormon missionary was present, . . . Saying it was inappropriate for leaders of a religion to disclose such information to civil authorities, several General Authorities declined to provide their diaries to the detectives who wanted to establish when and how frequently Hofmann visited the Church Administration Building.

Early in the investigation, friends of Mark Hofmann and Steven Christensen repeatedly told the detectives that they had been present when Hofmann and Christensen received telephone calls from Gordon Hinckley. Toll records showed Hofmann placed several calls to Hinckley's office from his car telephone during the week before the bombings, including two calls on the Monday immediately before the explosions. But Hinckley spoke of Hofmann as if he barely recognized his name. Repeatedly when he was asked about the document dealer, Hinckley answered: "*I can't remember.*" He said he couldn't remember what Hofmann had told him about the McLellin Collection, but said he was certain Hofmann had never mentioned that it contained any material that would be embarrassing to the church. . . .

Hinckley and Hugh Pinnock denied Steve Christensen's claim made to several of his friends shortly before his death that he had been asked to acquire documents for the church. Hinckley said he had met Christensen only once and had only the vaguest recollection of him. . . . He was visibly uncomfortable with the process he was being forced to undergo. He was not accustomed to having to answer questions, nor was he accustomed to being involved in a murder investigation. Clearly, he did not like the prospect of a subpoena to testify in court. (*A Gathering of Saints*, pp. 266-267)

To most members of the prosecution team, it was plain that Mark Hofmann had blackmailed the church. It was equally clear that leaders of the church were terrified that Gordon B. Hinckley would be required to testify against him and would be forced to testify, under oath, about his dealings with Hofmann.

From the first weeks of the investigation, lawyers for the church sought to head off this possibility. . . .

Gordon Hinckley was not summoned as a witness [at the preliminary hearing] after all.

Judge Grant, a devout Mormon, later attributed his absence to the trial attorneys' concern for Hinckley's health. But church spokesmen said Hinckley was not ill, and in fact the reasons were more complex than that. Ron Yengich, Hofmann's lawyer, was no more eager to have the leader of the church that dominated the community raise the specter of his having been blackmailed by his client than the church wanted a man close to its Prophet to appear to have been blackmailed. (*Ibid.*, pp. 311, 318)

Hugh Pinnock, a member of the Mormon Church hierarchy, was deeply involved in the McLellin transaction. He helped Mark Hofmann obtain a very large loan so that the imaginary McLellin collection could be purchased and kept out of the hands of church critics. Mark Hofmann defaulted on the loan, and Hugh Pinnock maintained that he had to pay it off out of his own pocket. Steven Christensen recorded the following in his journal:

Upon reaching Elder Pinnock's office we were welcomed most graciously. It was remarkable to both Mark and myself that Elder Pinnock was willing to assist to his fullest extent possible with only a brief explanation. It was as though he sensed completely the potential damage which this material would cause in the hands of the enemies of the Church. Within minutes he was able to arrange for Mark to receive \$185,000 in the form of a cashier's check. The check followed a signature promissory note executed by Mark in the favor of First Interstate Bank. (Steven Christensen's Journal, as cited by Robert Lindsey in *A Gathering of Saints*, p. 175)

Steven Christensen also wrote the following concerning Pinnock's intense desire to see the collection obtained and salted away:

Elder Pinnock left with Mark four phone numbers with which to reach him. The extent of his helpful **precautions included his having ready \$185,000 in cash** should the owner try to break the deal since a cashier's check may not be deemed "legal tender" on a Sunday

without the ability to convert it to cash. He also **offered to make available a prop-jet; and/or an armored car** for the transportation of the documents; however, Mark dissuaded him. (*Ibid.*, p. 176)

Mr. Christensen also explained in his diary that the documents would be donated to the church and "that the Church's representatives could say that they were **never purchased**." Since it would probably never dawn on anyone to ask if they had been donated, the church could keep its possession of the McLellin collection secret, and although Christensen noted that such a plan was not exactly forthright, "it perhaps saves the Church for the time being from having to offer an explanation on **why they won't release the material** and/or be under the necessity of mounting a public relations move to counter the contents of the collection" (*Ibid.*, p. 174).

As the investigation into the bombings got under way, a number of people who knew about the McLellin collection became concerned that the truth might come out. Shannon Flynn, for instance, broke his appointment with Detective Don Bell so that he could rush down to the Church Administration Building to find out how much he should tell police. Sillitoe and Roberts claim that later Detective Bell received a call from someone in LDS church security:

"I understand you're looking for Shannon Flynn. He's over here."

"He had an appointment here at 10:30," Bell said, wondering why church security was involved. . . . "We can do this the easy way or the hard way. If it's more important for Shannon Flynn to go to the church than to keep an appointment with police, we'll do it the hard way." . . .

Now Don Bell walked down to his office to see Shannon Flynn, who apologized for missing the morning appointment. "I had to go to the church first."

"Why?"

"To find out what to tell you."

"What if they told you to tell me nothing?"

"Then I wouldn't be here talking to you."

"So obviously they didn't tell you that."

"No, they said to come over and tell you the truth. I just didn't know if they wanted me to tell you all the truth." (*Salamander*, pp. 57, 61-62)

On page 201 of his book, *A Gathering of Saints*, Robert Lindsey informs us that the day before Flynn met with Apostle Oaks, police had already learned about the loan for the McLellin collection:

On the afternoon of October 16, 1985, a senior executive of the First Interstate Bank in Salt Lake City received a telephone call from a General Authority of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"Mark Hofmann just got blown up," the church leader said. "Don't say anything to anybody about the \$185,000 loan to Hofmann."

Only moments before, a security man at the bank had hung up his telephone after speaking to the Salt Lake City police chief.

"It's too late," the bank executive said. "We just called Bud Willoughby and told him we had a \$185,000 note outstanding with Hofmann for the McLellin Collection."

Sillitoe and Roberts report that when detectives arrived to talk with bank officials there was an attempt to suppress Hugh Pinnock's name:

Inside, they were introduced to several banking officials and their attorneys, who were engaged in a hot debate about whether or not they should give detectives the information that prompted their call. . . . Harvey Tanner, head loan officer, acted as spokesman.

Tanner told the detectives, who by then were as baffled as interested, that on June 28, 1985, he had received a telephone call from an important man in the LDS church. He said he was sending over Steven Christensen and his friend Mark Hofmann to get a loan for \$185,000, which, Tanner said, the church was authorizing.

Only the detectives' pens edged the silence. "Is that all it takes?" Bell asked. . . .

"Well," Tanner said, "this had been done in the past and we knew everything was okay."

Silence fell and heads turned toward a small man wearing bifocals in the back of the room. . . . The man said nothing, and the heads turned toward Tanner again.

Tanner described how Hofmann had filled out the loan application while Christensen observed.

A little odd, Bell thought. "Were you concerned about that?"

"No, because I'd had a call from this man at the LDS church."

"What's his name?"

"**I can't tell you right now.**" . . .

Bell . . . looked at Tanner. "This is all you require for a \$185,000 loan?"

Heads turned toward the man in back again, and this time he spoke. "No, it is not proper and that's not all it takes to get \$185,000." . . .

Bell looked Tanner squarely in the eye and pressed, "I need to know who the person is at the LDS church. This is a murder case and we need the facts."

Another debate raged among bank officers and attorneys as to whether that information could be supplied. Finally, the man in back spoke again. "Stop it. Tell him the man's name."

In the silence, Harvey Tanner said, "Hugh Pinnock." . . .

Tanner said when he had called Pinnock he had been reassured that Hofmann was good for the money, **the church was behind it**, not to worry. "You see," Tanner added, "we had done business with Pinnock before, **obtaining money for the church without the church being involved.**" (*Salamander*, pp. 41-43)

Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith charge that "the day after the bombings" Hugh Pinnock came to Steve Christensen's house and told his widow, Terri, that 'he had come to 'collect' Steve's confidential papers on the McLellin Collection. After all, the transaction was a 'private matter,' and therefore all materials relating to it should be kept under 'Church control'" (*The Mormon Murders*, p. 246). In the *Deseret News*, October 16, 1988, Christensen's widow maintained that "This is not true. Pinnock came to offer condolences. . . . Pinnock didn't come to get the paper. He didn't know about it. They made that up." Nevertheless, she

acknowledged that she did, in fact, give "him a journal entry of Steve's regarding the McLellin Collection." A detective we talked to was rather surprised that Christensen's widow denied that Hugh Pinnock came to learn about the journal entry. The detective felt that while Pinnock undoubtedly did offer "condolences," he also wanted to learn what Christensen had written about the McLellin collection. The detective claimed that Terri informed Pinnock that the important entry from her husband's journal (June 28, 1985) was already out of her control because she had given photocopies to acquaintances. Pinnock left with a photocopy of the entry and Terri turned the journal over to the police.

In any case, Naifeh and Smith go on to make some serious charges against Pinnock:

Don Bell, a sixteen-year veteran of the Salt Lake City Police Department, was already in a bad mood. When it was decided that Pinnock had to be interviewed, one of the Mormon officers in the department had suggested that it be done with kid gloves. "These people are different," he said. "We have to treat them differently." . . . Then he called Pinnock's secretary.

"I'm sorry. Elder Pinnock's in the Temple."

"How long will he be there?"

"I don't know. Who is calling?"

"This is who is calling. I need to talk to him." The suggestion that Pinnock be given deferential treatment had riled him.

"Is there anything we can do for you?"

"No, there isn't. I need to talk to him."

Five minutes later, Bell's phone rang. But it wasn't Pinnock, it was Martell Bird, the head of Church Security. "Why don't you give me the message for Elder Pinnock," he suggested. . . . "Because I don't *want* to give you the message. It has nothing to do with you. I want to talk to *him*. I can fit it around his schedule, if necessary. . . ." Clearly, this guy needed a shove. "Maybe the easiest thing to do is to get an investigative subpoena and have it served."

He could hear Bird jump on the other end of the line. "Hold on! We don't need to do that."

Twenty minutes later, Pinnock called. "I have the whole afternoon free," . . .

Bell already knew from an interview at the First Interstate Bank that Pinnock had arranged a loan for Mark Hofmann. Now Pinnock claimed he didn't know Hofmann. Bell choked back his astonishment and tried again. "Do you know anything about the McLellin Collection and this man who was trying to sell it?"

"Well, wait a minute," said Pinnock, apparently catching the look on Bell's face. "I think I do." . . .

"The McLellin Collection?" Pinnock fumbled with the pronunciation and mused another moment. "I think I remember something about that. There was a guy who came here. Now, I know nothing about him myself, but I remember that some guy came in and said something about a collection. And I remember having to get up and walk down the hall and go into Elder Oaks's office. And I asked Elder Oaks, 'Are we interested in a "McLellin Collection" or some kind of collection?' And he said, 'No. We're not buying anything. If the guy wants to donate

something, that's fine.' And I back and told the guy, "If you want to donate something that's fine."

Bell could hardly contain himself. Lies, especially when they came in great clumps like this, could be very entertaining. "You know," he said, "we have some information that Mr. Hofmann met with President Hinckley."

Pinnock leaned back in his chair. . . . "You have to understand something . . . People come into this building all the time. . . . And they say, 'We've been down there visiting the First Presidency . . . Or, 'We've been visiting President Hinckley.' . . . Nine times out of ten, they've just seen somebody low down on the totempole like me." . . .

"I'm afraid that's about it," Pinnock concluded. "I wish I could give you more help. But I'm sure President Hinckley has never met this man. . . ."

Bell pursued the subject of Steve Christensen. Pinnock said that Steve had been involved in arranging a donation of "some documents" to the Church just before his death. The donor was a private collector in Canada, and Steve was supposed to authenticate the documents.

"What kind of documents?" Bell pressed.

"Oh, some letters from Joseph Smith, something like that. . . . The documents were supposed to have been donated the day Steve was killed."

Bell knew backtracking when he heard it. Pinnock had apparently figured out that Bell was likely to uncover something about the transaction. Then he backtracked on Mark Hofmann.

"You know, that Mark Hofmann you mentioned? I think I now remember that on the 15th, his wife called my secretary and left a message saying he wanted to see me that afternoon to talk about some document collection. But we never had the appointment. There was no need to. After all, the Church wasn't interested in any collections." He was weaving an increasingly tangled web.

On his way to his car, Bell didn't doubt for a moment that he had been lied to. He only wanted to know why. Back at the department, he told a group of fellow officers about his conversation with Pinnock and other Church officials. "We've got some real problems," he said. "**They're obviously stonewalling us. They're lying to us.** I don't know what it is, but **they're hiding something.**" (*The Mormon Murders*, pp. 247-250)

When we talked with Detective Don Bell on the telephone on January 5, 1989, he said he had not read *The Mormon Murders*, but he confirmed that Hugh Pinnock had given him a bunch of "baloney" during the interview.

The account of this interview given by Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts in *Salamander* also indicates that Pinnock was not really leveling with the authorities. Sillitoe and Roberts, in fact, claim that Pinnock would not reveal the name of the mission president who was supposed to buy the McLellin collection:

[Don] Bell arrived at the old granite administration building . . . He asked Pinnock what he knew about Hofmann, but Pinnock wanted to talk about the tragedy of the bombings and how he had known both victims.

"I knew Mark Hofmann through Steve," he said, eventually coming around to the subject. "At one point I helped him arrange a personal loan he wanted to purchase the McLellin or McCellin—something like that—collection."

Bell looked hard at him. This scarcely sounded like the church leader described during the bank interview as deeply involved in the McLellin transaction. He said nothing.

"I knew so little about the McLellin or McCellin thing that I had to get up and go see Elder Oaks." Pinnock smiled cordially. "You've heard of Elder Oaks, haven't you? . . ."

"I asked Elder Oaks if we were interested in this McLellin or whatever. He said, well, he'd heard something about it, but we were not interested, especially not interested in buying it. If someone wished to donate it, that would be fine.

"I called a friend at the bank," Pinnock continued, "and told him he'd be seeing Steve Christensen and another individual coming over. If everything was in proper order, I said, it would be nice to give this individual a loan. . . ."

Bell put on his sternest face. "You mean to tell me the church was not involved in this transaction?"

"The church was not involved in this transaction," Pinnock said. **Bell noted the answer, then drew an arrow from it to the word "lie."** . . .

Bell wrote furiously, trying to keep up with the words if not the contradictions of Pinnock not knowing Hofmann well or arranging the deal but then offering to restructure the loan completely.

"I . . . suggested that instead of donating the collection we find a buyer."

"You did?"

"Oh, yes," Pinnock expanded. "You know, people love to donate things to the church . . . I suggested that he sell it to a party who was friendly to the LDS church."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, a lot of times, people friendly to the church make donations. I helped him find a buyer in Canada who would buy the collection and donate it at a later date. . . ."

Pinnock **would not tell the name of the buyer** but said the attorney's name was David West, Sr. . . .

Late Thursday afternoon law enforcers . . . met. Both officers and their chiefs attended. . . . After Don Bell summarized his interviews, he added his opinion: "**The church is stonewalling us.**" (*Salamander*, pp. 58-60, 64, 65)

Naifeh and Smith give this information concerning other interviews investigators had with Hugh Pinnock:

By the time [Jim] Bell and Farnsworth talked to Hugh Pinnock on December 2, the relationship between the Church and the police had turned from chilly to ice cold. Pinnock seemed to understand that: he shook throughout the meeting. In his fourteen years of police work, Farnsworth had never seen anybody more nervous. In a relatively short fifteen-minute exchange—the primary purpose of which was only to reassure him that they were not "out to get him" Pinnock drank what seemed like an entire pitcher of water. Bell wondered how he would handle the real interview the following Friday.

In fact, he was a basket case. With Dallin Oaks and the Church lawyer, Oscar McConkie, looking on in dismay, Pinnock led Farnsworth and questioners from the county attorney's office and the FBI on a wild three-hour ride through the last five months of his life.

His chronology was a mess: . . . Farnsworth . . . hardly had a chance to ask a question. He rarely knew what Pinnock was saying. It wasn't until afterward, when he deciphered his notes, that he began to see the gaping holes and inconsistencies.

It wasn't that Pinnock hadn't kept a record. In fact, he had kept a meticulous record, a journal of every phone call, every meeting, with the names of everyone in attendance. . . .

So why was the presentation so incoherent?

Because Pinnock didn't have the journal with him.

Farnsworth couldn't believe it. Instead of reading from his journal, Pinnock had copied onto separate sheets of paper all the 'relevant' entries. He even positioned them on the paper so they corresponded to the entries in the journal. The result was an incoherent patchwork of secondhand notes. Whenever somebody expressed confusion, Pinnock would simply say, "This is how it's written in my journal, but I don't have the journal here."

Why *didn't* he have the journal?

"I don't want to show you all those personal things having to do with the Church," he said, shaking just as he had at their last meeting. "I could read from that if I wanted to," he added defensively. "I could do that."

But he never did. He just returned to the cryptic entries and read verbatim, without expression. And if anyone asked him to elaborate, he simply said, "I can't remember." . . .

In retelling the events immediately following the bombings, Pinnock did seem genuinely touched. . . . Farnsworth came out of the interview believing Pinnock's pain was genuine, but little else. "Just not telling all," he wrote in his notes. (*The Mormon Murders*, pp. 303-305)

Sillitoe and Roberts make these comments concerning the two interviews:

By December, the investigators needed detailed information from the church leaders who had been involved in the McLellin transaction. . . . they planned their strategy carefully.

First, Jim Bell and Ken Farnsworth dropped by Hugh Pinnock's office to tell him an interview was imminent. Bell announced that he . . . was not and never had been Mormon. Farnsworth said that he had been raised a Mormon . . . though he was no longer involved in church activity. As they expected, Pinnock turned in his chair and spoke directly with Farnsworth. . . . Farnsworth began by explaining that they considered Pinnock an important witness. . . . Hard as it might be for Pinnock to believe, Farnsworth added, they were convinced that Hofmann had killed Christensen and Kathy Sheets. "It's absolutely imperative that we know everything that was happening between you and Steve and between Steve and Mark. We need to know about Hinckley and Oaks and the bank and the telephone calls—all of it. Also, you'd best be prepared to explain in court."

As Farnsworth talked, Pinnock gradually drained a pitcher of ice water, brushed lint from his trousers, shifted about in his chair, and paced around the desk. Bell could not remember **ever seeing a more nervous potential witness.**

On the way out of the building, Bell told Farnsworth he would not be coming back. "You get the church guys," he said. "I'll deal with the chief's office."

Farnsworth agreed. "It's a good thing we met with Pinnock on his own turf—his desk, his office. Think how nervous he'd have been anywhere else." Not that any alternative had been discussed.

On December 6, Farnsworth, Mike George, and an FBI agent met with Pinnock in his office, along with church attorney Oscar McConkie. Pinnock read relevant references from his daytimer and personal journal . . .

Following the interview, the investigators asked for copies of the relevant entries . . . most of the interview fit with the evidence. (*Salamander*, pp. 124-126)

The account of the last interview by Sillitoe and Roberts gives the impression that Hugh Pinnock had his "daytimer and personal journal" at the meeting. This, of course, contradicts the account given in *The Mormon Murders*. On January 5, 1989, we discussed this matter with Kenneth Farnsworth—one of the investigators who interviewed Mr. Pinnock. Mr. Farnsworth, who was serving as a detective at the time of the interviews, said that he was very upset with Hugh Pinnock because at the previous meeting he had made it very clear that Pinnock must bring his journal or daytimer to that meeting. Instead, Pinnock showed up with only his own notes of what he felt were relevant entries from the original journal. (Investigators, of course, would have no way of knowing whether these notes were verbatim copies of entries in the journal or if relevant information had been omitted.) When he was asked why he did not bring the original journal, Mr. Pinnock indicated that he had forgotten it! Moreover, neither Pinnock nor Hinckley ever showed investigators their journals or allowed them to obtain photocopies.

On page 236 of his book, Robert Lindsey said that there were "a series of occurrences that convinced many of the investigators that they were being stonewalled by leaders of the church." The church leaders were so uncooperative with investigators in the initial stages of the investigation that it even led to the suspicion that they might know something about the murders:

On the fifth floor of the Metropolitan Hall of Justice. . . . detective Jim Bell spoke at a meeting that had been called to review what detectives knew—and did not know—about the bombings.

He said he suspected the church was concealing information about Hofmann and the murders.

"They're hiding something; **the church is doing everything it can to make this as difficult as possible. I've never seen anything like this** in a homicide investigation." (*A Gathering of Saints*, p. 236)

Robert Lindsey goes on to say that "Ted Cannon [the Salt Lake County Attorney] expected the investigation to lead, one way or another, into the highest echelons of the church, and he was troubled by what that meant. . . . Like Bell, D'Elia

was suspicious of the church and angry at its power in Utah, and he rarely stopped complaining to his colleagues about what he interpreted as efforts by the church **to obstruct the investigation** and about excessive deference to church leaders. Like Bell, he had been warned about a doctrine in Utah called *Lying for the Lord*. It held that when a Mormon believed he was doing the work of the Lord, it was not a sin to lie” (*Ibid.*, pp. 238-239).

On page 240 of his book, Robert Lindsey cited the following concerning the investigation from Ted Cannon’s journal: “The real problem is that every single person in it has something to hide . . . the church either mispending church \$\$ on junk, or at the least embarrassed by the financial part of the papers . . .”

Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith were very suspicious of the role of LDS Church Security in the investigation. On page 44 of *The Mormon Murders* we find these questions: “Why did Church Security men materialize at the scene of the Hofmann bombing almost instantly? What about the report by the state legislator that Church Security had kept Hofmann under surveillance? That didn’t make them bombers, but it didn’t make them look good either. Did they see it happening and not try to stop it? At least one federal investigator from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms thought it looked more than just suspicious.”

It is possible, of course, that Church Security was tailing Mark Hofmann before the bombings. The leaders of the church must have been very concerned about what Mark Hofmann was doing with the McLellin collection. Rumors had it that he was trying to sell part of the collection before turning it over to the mission president. The reader will remember that Hugh Pinnock was apparently so concerned about the collection falling into the hands of the adversary that he was willing to provide an armored car to transport it. Right after the bomb exploded in Hofmann’s car, someone in Church Security told Alvin Rust “we know all about the McLellin papers” (*Salamander*, p. 38). Nevertheless, although one can speculate about the matter, it is a different matter to provide hard evidence to show that this was actually the case. That “Church Security men materialized at the scene of the Hofmann bombing almost instantly” does not really prove anything. After all, the Hofmann bombing occurred across the street from the Deseret Gym, which is owned by the Mormon Church itself. It seems reasonable to believe that Church Security would be on the alert after what had happened the day before. Moreover, both the Church Office Building and Temple Square are very close to where the explosion occurred.

One thing that might lead one to believe that Church Security was tailing Hofmann is a statement which appears in *Salamander*, p. 61:

Don Bell was not the only detective to trip over church security. Jim Bell had his concerns, as well. A church security officer had met him on the sidewalk by the Judge Building Tuesday morning after the bombing, when

Bell had gone out for equipment. “**We have thick files on Steven Christensen and Mark Hofmann if you’d like to see them,**” the officer had said. Bell was not familiar with either name, since at that point the victim had not been officially identified. He asked the agent to take the files to the SLCPD. Later, when he knew who both Christensen and Hofmann were, Bell asked for the files but learned that they had never arrived. When he had checked back with church security, the entire incident was denied.

From reading this, we reasoned that a Church Security officer would have to have known something about the murder if he offered a file on Mark Hofmann at this early time in the investigation when he was not even a suspect. We wondered if it were possible that someone in Church Security followed him to the Judge Building and saw him deliver the package containing the bomb. This theory was shattered, however, when we talked to Jim Bell on January 6, 1989. Detective Bell stated that although the incident actually occurred, Mark Hofmann’s name was not mentioned. Bell, in fact, did not hear Mark Hofmann’s name until Detective Farnsworth told him of a report concerning Hofmann wearing a coat which matched the description of the coat worn by the bomber. The Church Security officer had only claimed that the Mormon Church had a file on Steven Christensen. Bell also felt that since it had been three hours since the bombing and it was a well-known fact that the bomb went off in Christensen’s office, it is likely that Church Security would have figured out the identity of the victim.

While Detective Bell’s explanation seems to remove any evidence that Church Security knew Hofmann was the bomber, it still raises some important questions: Why, for instance, would Church Security have a thick file on Steven Christensen? Would this file have had something to do with Steven Christensen’s liberal views on Mormon history? Or could it have contained important information on the McLellin transaction which would have helped detectives to solve the bombing’s case more rapidly? It is interesting that someone in the church seemed to feel that the Christensen file had to be suppressed, and it is certainly strange that such an important file would never be subpoenaed by investigators.

In any case, while the Mormon leaders want us to believe that the “church cooperated fully” with investigators, the evidence indicates just the opposite. The article in the *Los Angeles Times*, September 18, 1988, quoted Richard P. Lindsay as saying that the response to “**all the allegations** made against the church” would be made public “in about 60 days.” According to the *Times*, it is supposed to be a “master list of errors, misquotes and exaggerations” appearing in “books and news articles.” As we go to press with this issue of the *Messenger*, no response from the church has appeared. We do not know whether church officials have decided to drop the project and attempt to ride out the storm or if they are still working on this monumental response.



Major Problems of Mormonism

We are pleased to announce the completion of our new book, *Major Problems of Mormonism*. Although our most comprehensive work, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* has proved to be very effective in bringing many Mormons to the truth, it contains more material than some people wish to read. In addition, we have printed important information in the *Messenger* and other publications which has not been included in our larger work. For these reasons, we have spent a great deal of time going through our various publications to determine what is the most important material on Mormonism and have finally distilled our thirty years of research down into a 256-page book. The price of only \$6.95 (**\$5.95** if ordered before March 31, 1988—mail orders please add 10%) makes it well within the price range of most people. (Those who wish to give or loan out extra copies to their friends will undoubtedly be interested in the quantity prices: 5 copies for \$25.00—10 copies for \$41.70.) Although this book is not meant to replace *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we believe it will eventually become our most popular book.

The following is a condensed and revised printing of Chapter 20 of *Major Problems of Mormonism*. This chapter is entitled, “The Hereafter,” and deals with the Mormon doctrine of “eternal progression.”

Joseph Smith seems to have been a firm believer in the orthodox teachings of Christianity concerning heaven and hell when he first began his work. Before many years had passed, however, he had developed some very unique doctrines concerning the hereafter.

In 1832 Joseph Smith gave a revelation (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 76) which stated that heaven was divided up into three different kingdoms—i.e., the celestial, terrestrial and telestial kingdoms. Later he had another revelation which divided the “celestial” kingdom itself into compartments: “In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees; And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage]” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 131:1, 2). It is clear from this that the only ones who enter into the highest division in the “celestial” kingdom are those who are married for time and eternity in a Mormon temple.

The Mormon doctrine of pre-existence plays an important role in the function of those who obtain the “highest” glory in the “celestial kingdom.” According to Mormon teachings, God and his wife or wives were the parents of all the spirits who later come to be born on earth. In other words, we were all supposed to have been part of one immense family of spirit children in heaven. Those who are accounted worthy to become Gods and Goddesses after the resurrection are likewise to give birth to spirit children throughout all eternity, and these spirits will eventually take bodies on other worlds.

Milton R. Hunter, who was a member of the Mormon Church’s First Council of the Seventy, wrote the following:

. . . Joseph explained . . . that **the Gods were to be parents of spirit children** just as our Heavenly Father and Mother were the parents of the people of this earth. (*The Gospel Through the Ages*, 1958, p. 120)

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt set forth some important details and problems concerning the birth of spirit children to celestial beings:

In the Heaven where our spirits were born, there are **many Gods, each one of whom has his own wife or wives** . . . Each God, through his wife or wives, raises up a numerous family of sons and daughters; . . . each father and mother will be in a condition **to multiply forever and ever**. As soon as each God has begotten many millions of male and female spirits, and his Heavenly inheritance becomes too small, to comfortably accommodate **his great family**, he, in connection with his sons, organizes a **new world** . . . where he sends both the male and female spirits to inhabit tabernacles of flesh and bones. . . . The inhabitants of each world are required to reverence, adore, and **worship** their own personal father who dwells in the Heaven which they formerly inhabited. (*The Seer*, March 1853, p. 37)

Apostle Pratt estimated that “seventy thousand million [i.e., 70 billion] sons and daughters were born in Heaven, and kept their first estate . . .” Pratt went on to explain that it is “probable that the period required for the formation of the infant spirit, is of the same length as that required in the world for the organization of the infant tabernacle.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 38-39)

The description given by Mormon leaders of the function of a woman who advances to Godhood reminds us of the role played by a queen bee. The queen bee, of course, produces swarms of offspring—as many as 2,500 a day! Her main purpose appears to be to produce more bees. Mormon scholar Eugene England seems to be repelled by the concept concerning spirit children taught by Apostle Pratt and other “influential Mormons and teachers of religion.” He maintains that if “humans can already produce test-tube babies and clones, God has certainly found more efficient ways to produce spirit children than by turning celestial partners into mere **birth machines**. To anticipate such a limited, unequal role for women in eternity insults and devalues them” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Winter 1987, p. 148). While many Mormon women would agree with England, the teaching seems too embedded in Mormon theology to be torn out without endangering the entire doctrine of “eternal progression.” Apostle Bruce R. McConkie made it very plain that spirit children are literally born to the Eternal Father and Mother: “Our *spirit bodies* had their beginning in pre-existence when we were **born** as the spirit children of God our Father. Through that **birth process** spirit element was organized into intelligent entities” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, p. 750).

Although Mormon theology teaches that a woman can obtain “Godhood,” it is actually a subservient role to her husband. She is still required to “yield the most perfect obedience” to her “great Head”—her husband (*The Seer*, p. 159). While her husband will be worshipped by their spirit children and manifest himself to them after they go to an earth to experience mortality, she will apparently have no contact with them there. According to Apostle Orson Pratt, “the children, so far as we are informed, have never been commanded to pray to her or worship her” (*Ibid.*, p. 159).

Many Mormon women have serious reservations about the concept of having billions of spirit children every time their husbands decide to people another world. They believe that this teaching smacks of confusion and mass production. Mormon leaders, of course, will argue that women will be perfectly happy when they arrive in the heaven described in their theology. Childbirth will not be painful in heaven, and all the other details and problems will be worked out. Even so, since Mormon theology limits Gods and Goddesses to physical bodies, it seems that it would be very difficult for either the “Heavenly Father” or the “Heavenly Mother” to give much individual attention to billions of children.

AN EVER-EXPANDING HELL. In the Bible we read that hell was originally “prepared for the devil and his angels,” but people who refuse to repent and receive the Lord into their lives shall also “go away into everlasting punishment . . .” (Matthew 25:41-46). At the time that Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, he was firmly committed to the orthodox position concerning hell, and his first major work is filled with this teaching. Later, however, he was influenced by the teachings of the Universalists, who proclaimed that “all men will finally be saved.” In the Book of Mormon he had taught that the wicked would go to an “awful hell” and “endure a never ending torment” (see Book of Mormon, Alma 42:16; Mosiah 3:38-39; 3 Nephi 27:11, 17; Alma 54:7). In spite of the strong teachings concerning hell in the Book of Mormon, by 1832 Joseph Smith had completely repudiated the orthodox position. He claimed, in fact, that the wicked would be saved in the telestial kingdom.

While Joseph Smith tried to destroy the Biblical teaching concerning hell, his doctrine of “eternal progression” seems to create a hell which is infinitely larger than the mind is able to comprehend. The Mormon hell, in fact, turns out to be a place or places of punishment which will continue to claim captives at an increasingly greater rate throughout all eternity.

To begin with, Mormonism teaches that the devil and his angels were born to the Heavenly Father and the Heavenly Mother in the pre-existence as spirit children. In other words, they were originally part of the family of spirits who were to come to earth to receive bodies. Instead, however, they rebelled, were cast out, and became the “sons of perdition.” While Mormons believe that “very few” of the spirits who come to earth will end up in hell, they affirm that all those who followed the devil in the pre-existence are to go to an everlasting hell. Bruce R. McConkie made this statement concerning them: “Their lot is to wallow in wickedness to all eternity. They are *spiritually dead eternally*” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, p. 756).

According to a revelation given by Joseph Smith, a “third” of the spirits born to God and his wife became sons of perdition and were thrust down to hell:

... the devil was before Adam, for he rebelled against me, saying, Give me thine honor, which is my power; and also a **third part** of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency; And they were thrust down, and thus came the devil and his angels; And, behold, there is a place prepared for them from the beginning, which place **is hell.** (*Doctrine and Covenants* 29:36-38)

Apostle Orson Pratt estimated that there were about 35 billion spirit children of God who were sent to this eternal hell

(*The Seer*, p. 38). Mormon writer Eugene England speaks of “the 80 billion or so people demographers compute will have lived on earth by 2000 A.D.” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Winter 1987, p. 148). The figure given by Mr. England is similar to that given by Apostle Orson Pratt—i.e., 70 billion. If 80 billion people will eventually live on earth, then it follows that the “sons of perdition” number 40 billion. The number could be even higher, however, because the figure of “80 billion” on earth does not include the millennium.

While Mormon apologists criticize others for believing in the idea of eternal punishment of the wicked, their church’s own doctrine has already consigned 40,000,000,000 or more of God’s own spirit children to eternal damnation. This, however, is just the tip of the iceberg. If the doctrine of “eternal progression” is true, this same thing has already happened on innumerable worlds. In a discourse given February 18, 1855, Apostle Orson Pratt expressed the view that there are already countless Gods and worlds: “If we should take a **million of worlds** like this and number their particles, we should find that there **are more Gods than there are particles of matter in those worlds**” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, p. 345).

The Mormon couple who looks forward to Godhood should be aware of the serious implications of their theology. If the doctrine of “eternal progression” is true, they will be faced with a great deal of heartache. To begin with, in the hereafter they will vividly recall their pre-existent state in which a third of their own family fought against their Heavenly Father and became sons of perdition. On the positive side, they will have a spirit child who will become the “redeemer” of their earth, but this will be offset to some extent by the fact that one of their other sons will turn out to be a “tempter.” President Brigham Young made this comment about the matter:

Sin is upon every earth that ever was created, . . . Consequently **every earth has its redeemer, and every earth has its tempter**; and every earth, and the people thereof . . . pass through all the ordeals that we are passing through. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 14, pp. 71-72)

The worst thing of all, however, is that according to Mormon theology the couple who aspire to Godhood will probably have to send billions of their own spirit children to an eternal hell. In the revelation to Joseph Smith which we referred to earlier, Jesus is purported to have said that “a third part” of the spirit children were lost “because of their agency” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 29:36). Since part of the eternal plan is to give the spirit children free agency, this opens the door so that the spirits can choose to become sons of perdition. Now, if the current Mormon God suffered a loss of at least 40,000,000,000 children, it seems highly unlikely that those who receive Godhood under him will have a better rate of success. In any case, after the couple goes through this great loss, it will be time to start another world. This same process of having spirit children to populate worlds is supposed to continue throughout all eternity.

To those who have even an elementary understanding of mathematics, it is obvious that the Mormon doctrine of “eternal progression” would create an immeasurable number of sons of perdition. Although Apostle Orson Pratt did not discuss the multiplication of the sons of perdition, he did give some idea of how rapidly the number of worlds and Gods would increase under the Mormon plan:

The fourth generations would people over a trillion, and the fifth over a quadrillion of worlds; while the one-hundredth generation would people more worlds than could be expressed by raising one million to the ninety-ninth power. (*The Seer*, page 39)

The person who accepts the Mormon doctrine of “eternal progression” is forced by mathematics to conclude that eventually quadrillions of worlds will be created by the Gods every second and that this will go on forever and ever. While this idea might really appeal to a man who is interested in obtaining “authority and dominion as the Grand Patriarch of the endless generations of his posterity,” there is a very gloomy downside to the story since every second that passes **quadrillions** of spirits will become “sons of perdition” and be lost forever, and this number will rapidly increase throughout all eternity!

Although Joseph Smith claimed he was trying to straighten out the Christian world with respect to the hereafter, it seems that he has only produced more confusion. He has separated the one superlative heaven which Jesus taught into a number of different compartments which will cause a segregated condition in the afterlife. While Smith’s doctrine concerning the “sealing” of families together for “time and all eternity” appears to promise that Mormons will have their children in the resurrection, his doctrine of “eternal progression” seems to take them far away. If the children are faithful, they will be off creating their own worlds throughout eternity. Moreover, Joseph Smith’s attempt to evade the Biblical teaching concerning hell led him into such a state of confusion that he ended up creating a hell which looms as an ever expanding black hole sucking in “a third part” of the spirit children of worlds innumerable to eternal destruction.



* * OTHER BOOKS * *

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PO BOX 1884
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