

# LDS DOCUMENTS & MURDER

BY JERALD TANNER

As I left the Salt Lake City Post Office on October 15, 1985, I noticed that the east side of Main Street was blocked off by the police. Later I was to learn that a murder had been committed at the Judge Building—less than a block from where I obtained my mail. Steven F. Christensen, a Mormon bishop, had picked up a box in front of his office which turned out to be a “booby-trapped shrapnel bomb.” Mr. Christensen died instantly. It soon became apparent that the victim was the same man who bought the notorious “White Salamander Letter”—a letter which proved to be embarrassing to the Mormon Church. Later that morning another package exploded killing Kathleen Sheets. This package was addressed to her husband, J. Gary Sheets who was also a bishop in the Mormon Church. Mr. Sheets “had helped fund research that authenticated the [Salamander] letter” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 16, 1985).

Since Sandra and I had been the first ones to print extracts from the Salamander letter, we became somewhat concerned about our safety. The next day a bomb exploded in a car less than two miles from our house. Mark Hofmann, who sold the Salamander letter to Mr. Christensen, was critically injured in this blast. By this time we began to seriously consider the possibility that there was a systematic conspiracy to wipe out those who were bringing out information which was embarrassing to the Mormon church. Because of our connection with the Salamander letter we were deluged with phone calls from the news media and others who were concerned about our safety or just wanted to find out what was going on in Salt Lake City. The next day (October 17) the *Deseret News* reported a surprising development: “. . . police say Hofmann is considered not just a third victim but also a prime suspect in the Tuesday killings, and others may be involved as well.” Although police have continued to point to Hofmann as the “prime suspect,” no murder charges have been filed. If the situation should change before I finish this article, I will make a note of it. The *Salt Lake Tribune* for November 20, reported the following:

Mark Hofmann, who investigators continue to call their “prime suspect” in the bombing murders of two people last month, has passed a lie detector test indicating he is telling the truth when he says he did not plant the bombs, his defense attorney said Tuesday.



**Mark Hofmann—Bomber or Victim?**

Lie detector tests, of course, are usually not used as evidence in court, and so far Mr. Hofmann’s attorney has not allowed police to question him. A federal grand jury did indict Mr. Hofmann “on one count of possession of an unregistered Action Arms Ltd. Uzi machine gun” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, November 7, 1985), but Hofmann pleaded “not guilty.” This charge is not related to the bombings.

## MEETING MR. HOFMANN

I first became acquainted with Mark Hofmann in 1980. Just after he discovered the Anthon transcript (a sheet of paper which is supposed to contain the actual characters Joseph Smith copied from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon), Mr. Hofmann came to our store and discussed the discovery. Although he had served as a Mormon missionary in England, it soon became evident that he did not fully trust the Mormon church leaders. He said, in fact, that he was suspicious that the church might be bugging his phone. He did not claim, however, to have any real evidence about the matter.

In the years that followed Mr. Hofmann would occasionally visit our bookstore and tell of the remarkable discoveries that he was making. In the latter part of 1983 (probably December) I first heard that Mark Hofmann had a letter which was supposed to have been written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris. It was dated October 23, 1830, and was addressed to W. W. Phelps. When I learned of the contents of the letter, I realized that it could

deal a devastating blow to the Mormon Church. Sandra and I had previously written a book entitled, *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*. In this book we presented strong evidence that Joseph Smith was involved in money-digging and magic. Martin Harris' letter seemed to provide new and exciting evidence which supported our thesis. This letter is known as the Salamander letter because Martin Harris wrote that Joseph Smith claimed when he went to get the gold plates for the Book of Mormon, a "white salamander" in the bottom of the hole "transfigured himself" into a "spirit" and "struck me 3 times."

Fortunately, I was able to obtain some important extracts from the letter and was preparing to print them in the March 1984 issue of the *Messenger*. I was very excited that we at Utah Lighthouse Ministry would be the first to break this important story to the world. While in the midst of compiling evidence to support the authenticity of the Salamander letter, I made a discovery that shook me to the very core. I found that the account of the transformation of the white salamander into the spirit was remarkably similar to a statement E. D. Howe published in *Mormonism Unveiled*. This book, written four years after the date which appears in the Harris letter, told of a toad "which immediately transformed itself into a spirit" and struck Joseph Smith. Even more disconcerting, however, was the fact that other remarkable parallels to the Salamander letter were found just two or three pages from the account of the transformation of the toad into a spirit (see *Mormonism Unveiled*, pages 273, 275 and 276).

Some years before I had encountered similar evidence of plagiarism in Joseph Smith's *History of the Church*. The Mormon church leaders had always proclaimed that this *History* was actually written by Joseph Smith himself. My research, however, led me to the conclusion that the largest portion of it had been compiled after his death. I found that later Mormon historians had taken portions of newspapers and diaries written by other people and changed them to the first person so that readers would believe that they were authored by Joseph Smith himself. In agreement with my conclusions, Mormon scholars later admitted that over 60% of the *History* was compiled after Smith's death (see *Mormonism—Shadow at Reality?* pages 127-135).

In any case, parallels I had discovered between the Salamander letter and *Mormonism Unveiled* reminded me very much of the work I had done on Joseph Smith's *History*. Although what I discovered about the Salamander letter was not conclusive proof that it was a forgery, it was certainly suspicious. It seemed, in fact, to throw a monkey wrench into all my plans concerning the publication of the

letter. Since I knew that it was very unlikely that anyone else would realize the significance of these parallels, there was some temptation to keep the matter to myself. I knew, however, that God knew what I had seen, and I began to feel that He had shown me these unpleasant facts to warn me against endorsing the letter. Furthermore, I knew that I would never be satisfied if my case against Mormonism was based on any material which had been forged. It was clear, therefore, that there was only one course of action which I could follow—i.e., print the whole truth in the *Messenger*. In the March 1984 issue, therefore, we raised the question by printing the title, "Is It Authentic?" Under the title we wrote:

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. We will give the reasons for our skepticism as we proceed with this article.

On page 4, we wrote: "While we would really like to believe that the letter attributed to Harris is authentic, we do not feel that we can endorse it until further evidence comes forth."

As soon as I noticed that there were problems with the Salamander letter, I began to realize the serious implications this would have for the study of Mormon history. Prior to Mark Hofmann's appearance on the scene in 1980, the documents we had used in building our case against Mormonism seemed to have a good pedigree. For instance, the Joseph Smith Papyri were rediscovered in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1967. Although officials at the museum did not acquire the papyri until 1947, they had been aware of them since 1918. The papyri could, in fact, be traced back to the Smith family. The documents which proved that Joseph Smith was tried as a "Glass looker" in 1826 could be traced back to the jail in Norwich, N.Y. Two men, in fact, signed affidavits that they were discovered in the basement of the jail. Joseph Smith's "Strange Account" of the First Vision, as well as his diaries, could be traced directly to the Church Historical Department where they had been preserved.

When Mark Hofmann came on the scene everything seemed to change. Hofmann was vague about where his finds were coming from, and no one seemed to think of questioning his veracity. The *Deseret News* for October

27, 1985, said that Hofmann's "reputation regarding documents was impeccable, and his friends in the historical circle defended it." It was only after I began to have doubts about the Salamander letter, however, that I began to realize that Hofmann was not providing pedigrees for his discoveries. While Mormon scholars felt that the Bible in which Hofmann found the Anthon transcript (it was supposed to have been pasted between two pages) came from the Smith family, Hofmann refused to disclose where he had bought the book. Since book collectors sometimes have a policy of checking out every page of a rare book, I would like to have talked to the collector to see if he remembered anything glued between the pages. With regard to the Joseph Smith III Blessing, Hofmann only said that it came from a descendant of Thomas Bullock. When we pressed Hofmann to reveal which descendant (there must be hundreds), he refused to be of any help. Lucy Mack Smith's 1829 letter, Joseph Smith's 1825 letter and Martin Harris' 1873 letter all seem to have no pedigree. In the case of the Salamander letter, I did learn that Hofmann claimed that it came from a man by the name of Lyn Jacobs. I also learned that Hofmann and Jacobs were working together in the document business. Since the documents were all coming from these two men, it was necessary to focus in upon their backgrounds.

Although the money involved in the sale of Mormon documents would provide a sufficient motive for forgery, I began to wonder if there might be some sort of plan or even conspiracy to control the direction of Mormon history by this method. In any case, while doing research with regard to the Salamander letter, I noticed something about Hofmann's first discovery that bothered me. This was Charles Anthon's letter describing the sheet of paper which contained the characters copied from the Book of Mormon. Anthon stated that the "letters . . . were arranged in perpendicular columns, and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle divided into various compartments, decked with various strange marks, . . ." This description exactly matched the document which Mark Hofmann found in 1980—i.e., the Anthon transcript. Before Hofmann's discovery, the church had another old sheet of paper containing Book of Mormon characters. It was believed that this was the sheet Harris had taken to Professor Anthon. Instead of having the characters running in vertical columns, this paper has them going horizontally. Furthermore, it does not have a circular object. When Hofmann made his remarkable discovery, Anthon's letter was appealed to as evidence that the real "Anthon transcript" had been found. At the time, this seemed to be a good argument for the documents authenticity, but when I later examined E. D. Howe's *Mormonism Unveiled* in the

light of its possible relationship to the Salamander letter, I discovered that Anthon's letter is printed on page 272 of that book. This could be quite significant because the important parallels to the Salamander letter begin on the very next page (page 273). I could not help but wonder if Howe's book had provided the creative impulse for both the Anthon transcript and the Salamander letter. I later did a study of the Anthon transcript which suggested that there may be spelling problems in the material written on the back of the document which is supposed to be in the handwriting of Joseph Smith (see *Mr. Boren and the White Salamander*, pages 9-10). Moreover, I demonstrated that there were important parallels in both wording and spelling to "Joseph Smith's 1832 Account of His Early Life." The parallels in wording could easily be explained by saying that both documents came from the same author. The parallels in spelling, however, do present a problem because part of the material in the 1832 account is in the hand of Joseph Smith's scribe.

On August 22, 1984, I printed the first part of the pamphlet, *The Money-Digging Letters*. On page 9, I wrote: ". . . a number of important documents have come to light during the 1980's. The questions raised by the Salamander letter have forced us to take a closer look at some of these documents." In the same publication I wrote the following concerning the Salamander letter: "The more we examine this letter attributed to Harris, the more questions we have about its authenticity" (page 6). I went on to show important parallels between other documents and the Salamander letter. I noted that the parallels to the Joseph Knight account (first published in 1976) seem to be extremely important. On page 7, I told of an interview with Martin Harris which was published in 1859:

The interview in *Tiffany's Monthly* also raises a very serious question about the lack of religious material in the Salamander letter. In the interview, Harris quoted at least five portions of the Bible. He used the words *revelation*, *Moses*, *Scripture* and *Christ* at least once. He used the word *prayed* twice, and mentioned the *devil* four times. The word *angel* or *angels* appears five times. *God* is mentioned seven times, and the word *Lord* appears ten times. In the Salamander letter all of these words are absent. In fact, there is nothing we can find concerning religion. Spirits are mentioned many times in the letter, but they are never linked to God in any way. Instead they are linked to money-digging. They are the guardians of the treasures.

This total lack of religious material seems to be out of character for Martin Harris. A person might try to maintain that Harris was more interested in religion in 1859, but the evidence shows that he was always that way. (*The Money-Digging Letters*, page 7)

On the following page, I charged that Mr. Hofmann had originally tried to sell the Salamander letter “to the Mormon Church for a large amount of money.” Hofmann later told me that it was actually Lyn Jacobs who took the letter to the church. Hofmann seemed willing, however, to admit that he was involved in the decision to sell the letter to the church. However this may be, I went on to state:

In the past Mr. Hofmann acted under the theory that the Church will buy up embarrassing documents to suppress them. This is very clear from his own account of how he handled the discovery of the Joseph Smith III Blessing. In a paper given at the Mormon History Association, Mark Hofmann stated that he did not want “to come across like I was trying to blackmail the Church,” but he acknowledged that if the Church had wanted him to, he would have promised to never tell anyone about its discovery: . . . Hofmann later commented: “It surprised me a bit that the Church didn’t buy it up quick and stash it away somewhere, . . .” (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 19) . . .

However this may be, it is reported that the Mormon Church felt that Hofmann’s price was too high on the Salamander letter and refused his offer. The document was later sold to Steven Christensen.

We feel that one of the most important tests of the letter’s authenticity is its history since it was written. If Mr. Hofmann will tell historians where he obtained the letter, then it may be possible to trace it back to its original source. (*The Money Digging Letters*, page 8)

The day following the publication of *The Money-Digging Letters* (August 23, 1984), Mark Hofmann came to our home and had a long talk with Sandra. He seemed very distressed and hurt that we, of all people, would question his discoveries. He had expected that opposition might come from those in the church, but he was amazed that Utah Lighthouse Ministry had taken a position which was critical to him. Mr. Hofmann tried to explain that he could not reveal the source of the Salamander letter because he had sold it to Christensen. With regard to the Joseph Smith III Blessing, Hofmann indicated that he had given the Mormon Church an affidavit which stated where he had obtained it. He could not reveal the source to the public, however, because the member of the Bullock family from whom he had purchased the document also had important papers concerning Brigham Young’s finances that would be embarrassing to the Church.

Sandra felt that Mark Hofmann was almost to the point of tears as he pled his case as to why we should trust him. He did not make any threats, however, nor did he show any sign of violence. At any rate, Hofmann’s explanations certainly did not satisfy me.

On August 25, 1984, John Dart wrote the following in the *Los Angeles Times*:

. . . unusual caution about the [Salamander] letter’s genuineness has been expressed by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, longtime evangelical critics of the Mormon Church. . . . The Tanners suggestion of forgery has surprised some Mormons, who note that the parallels in wording also could be taken as evidence for authenticity.

The *Deseret News* for September 1, 1984, reported:

. . . outspoken Mormon Church critics Jerald and Sandra Tanner suspect the document is a forgery, they told the *Deseret News*.

Jerald Tanner . . . says similarities between it and other documents make its veracity doubtful. . . .

Another disturbing aspect, Tanner said, was the letter seemed out of character for Harris. “In the entire text of the letter, there is no mention of religion . . . If it’s a forgery, then it’s important because there’s a document forger out there.

By the time we printed the January 1985 issue of the *Messenger*, we had received word that the evidence derived from physical testing seemed to indicate that the Salamander letter was genuine. At that time I wrote the following:

Since I have spent years proving that early Mormonism is linked to magic and money-digging, this news should have brought me a great deal of satisfaction.

On the next page the reader will find a complete text of the Salamander letter. In **bolder type** I have added quotations from seven publications which resemble portions of the letter. (Colors added to aid referencing.) The books and articles quoted are as follows:

1. *Mormonism Unveiled*, by E. D. Howe, 1834
2. *Brigham Young University Studies*, Autumn 1976
3. *New Witness For Christ In America*, by Francis W. Kirkham, 1951
4. *Tiffany’s Monthly*, interview with Martin Harris, 1859
5. *A.B.C. History of Palmyra and the Beginning of “Mormonism,”* by Willard Bean, 1938
6. *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, 1983
7. *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, by B. H. Roberts, 1930

Palmyra Oct 23d 1830

Dear Sir

Your letter of yesterday is received & I hasten to answer as fully as I can--Joseph Smith Jr first come to my notice in the year 1824 in the summer of that year I contracted with his father to build a fence on my property (**During the summer of 1824 there was a small leak that soon grew larger. During the fall of 1824 Joseph Smith, sr., and his son, Hyrum, were walling a basement and digging and curbing a well for Martin Harris. 5:35**) in the course of that work I aproach Joseph & ask how it is in a half day you put up what requires your father & 2 brothers a full day working together he says I have not been with out assistance (**Nor was this the only assistance...he [David Whitmer] found to his surprise that he had accomplished more in a few hours than was usual to do in two or three days. 7:Vol.1, p. 126**) but can not say more only you better find out the next day I take the older Smith by the arm (**I took him by the arm 4:169**) & he says Joseph can see anything he wishes by looking at a stone Joseph often sees spirits (**This light of the stone,...enabled him [Joseph] to see any thing he wished. Accordingly he discovered ghosts, infernal spirits 1:259**) here with great kettles of coin money (**kettles filled with gold and silver 1:237**) it was Spirits who brought up rock (**Joseph, Sen. told me...the large stones...we call them rocks...are, in fact, most of them chests of money raised by the heat of the sun 1:233**) because Joseph made no attempt on their money I latter dream I converse with spirits which let me count their money when I awake I have in my hand a dollar coin which I take for a sign Joseph describes what I seen in every particular says he the spirits are greived so I through back the dollar In the fall of the year 1827 I hear Joseph found a gold bible I take Joseph aside & he says it is true (**They told me that the report that Joseph, Jun. had found golden plates, was true 1:253**) I found it 4 years ago with my stone (**He found them by looking in the stone 4:169**) but only just got it because of the enchantment (**the enchantment 1:267**) the old spirit come to me 3 times in the same dream & says dig up the gold (**after a third visit from the same spirit in a dream he proceeded to the spot 3:v.1, p.151**) but when I take it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole (**after the plates were taken from their hiding place by Jo, he...looked into the hole, where he saw a toad, which immediately transformed itself into a spirit 1:275-76**) (**Sir Walter Scott says that the old astrologers "affirmed that they could bind to their service, and imprison in a ring, a mirror, or a stone, some fairy, sylph, or salamander, and compel it to appear when called, and render answers to such questions as the viewer should propose. 6:23**) & struck me 3 times (**and struck him...the spirit struck him again, and knocked him three or four rods 1:242**) & held the treasure & would not let me have it because I lay it down to cover over the hole (**thot he would cover the place over 2:31**) when the spirit says do not lay it down (**he had been commanded not to lay the plates down 2:31, footnote 5**) Joseph says when can I have it (**Joseph says, "when can I have it?" 2:31**) the spirit says one year from to day if you obey me (**you have not obeyed your orders...come one year from this day 1:242**) look to the stone after a few days he looks the spirit says bring your brother Alvin (**bring with you your oldest brother 1:242**) Joseph says he is dead (**he said that he was dead 1:243**) shall I bring what remains (**"Whereas reports have been industriously put in circulation, that my son, Alvin, had been removed from the place of interment 5:34**) but the spirit is gone Joseph goes to get the gold bible but the spirit says you did not bring your brother you can not have it (**he went to the place and the personage appeared and told him he could not have it now 2:31**) look to the stone Joseph looks but can not see who to bring (**Lawrence...asked him to look in his stone, he looked and said there was nothing; 1:243**) the spirit says I tricked you again (**This rogue of a spirit ...intended it would seem to play our prophet a similar trick 3:v.1, p.290**) look to the stone (**he told him to look again 1:243**) Joseph looks & sees his wife (**he looked in his glass and found it was Emma 2:31**) on the 22d day of Sept 1827 they get the gold bible--I give Joseph \$50 to move him down to Pa (**He obtained fifty Dollars in money mid hired a man to move him and his wife to pensylvany 2:34**) Joseph says when you visit me I will give you a sign he gives me some hiroglyphics I take them to Utica Albany & New York in the last place Dr Mitchel gives me a introduction to Professor Anthon says he they are short hand Egyptian the same what was used in ancient times (**taken by Mr. Harris to Utica, Albany and New York; at New York, they were shown to Dr. Mitchell and he referred to professor Anthon who...declared them to be ancient shorthand Egyptian 1:273**) bring me the old book & I will translate says I it is made of precious gold & is sealed from view says he I can not read a sealed book--Joseph found some giant silver spectacles with the plates (**Joseph Smith, through a pair of silver spectacles, found with the plates 1:273**) he puts them in a old hat & in the darkness reads the words & in this way it is all translated (**he put the urim and thummim into his hat and Darkened his Eyes then he would take a sentence and it would apper...Thus was the hol [whole] translated 2:35**) & written down--about the middle of June 1829 Joseph takes me together with Oliver Cowdery & David Whitmer to have a view of the plates our names are appended to the book of Mormon which I had printed with my own money-- (**The whole expense of publishing an edition of 5,000 copies, was borne by Martin 1:13**) space and time both prevent me from writing more at presant if there is any thing further you wish to inquire I shall attend to it

Yours Respectfully  
Martin Harris

W W Phelps Esq

Instead, however, I find myself facing a real dilemma. While the tests and the opinions of noted Mormon scholars, seem to indicate that I should relax and enjoy the victory, I still have serious reservations about the document's authenticity. In fact, I find it very hard to believe that the Martin Harris I have learned about from numerous historical sources could have written the letter. (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, January 1985, page 4)

I pointed out in that issue of the *Messenger* [January 1985] that I had recently examined a number of historical sources relating to Martin Harris, and that

These references, from early newspapers up until the time of his death, point to the unmistakable conclusion that Harris could hardly open his mouth without talking about religion. That he could write a letter of over 600 words without mentioning the subject seems highly unlikely. This is especially true since the Salamander letter deals with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and gives ample opportunities to bring up the subject. While it is true that Martin Harris believed in money-digging and the superstitions connected with it, it seems very hard to believe that he would write a prospective convert like Phelps and leave out all the divine elements of the Book of Mormon.

On page 9 of the same issue, I showed that an Episcopalian minister by the name of John A. Clark claimed in 1842 that Martin Harris told him the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in 1827 and that Clark did not remember Harris saying anything about the white salamander that was transformed into a spirit. Instead, Clark related that Harris told him about a dream Joseph Smith had about an "angel of God" who visited him "while he lay upon his bed." It seemed inconsistent to me that Harris would tell this story before the Book of Mormon came forth and then refer to an "old spirit" when he wrote the Salamander letter. In this same issue I expressed the hope that scholars would not "side-step" the issue of the pedigree of the Salamander letter and stated that "Too many of the documents which have recently come forth appear to be like Melchisedec, 'Without father, without mother, without descent, . . . ' (Hebrews 7:3)."

On April 28, 1985, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that the noted document examiner Kenneth Randall proclaimed that the Salamander letter was authentic. Even the Church Section of the Mormon owned *Deseret News* (April 28) published an article entitled: "1830 Harris letter authenticated." At the Mormon History Association, Church scholars Dean Jessee and Ronald Walker told of their research which confirmed the authenticity of the letter. The most noted Mormon scholars seemed to completely accept the letter's authenticity.

In the June 1985 issue of the *Messenger*, I wrote the following:

. . . At the outset I will state that I originally approached the Salamander letter with a strong bias towards its authenticity. . . . No one could have possibly have had a greater desire to prove the Salamander letter authentic, and I doubt that many people have invested the time and effort that I have in sifting the evidence. This letter has been constantly on my mind for well over a year. My desire has been to come up with a definite answer concerning its reliability. At the present time, however, I still find myself with some serious doubts. . . .

When I originally took a stand against the Salamander letter, some people thought that I was just trying to force the Mormon researchers to come out with their research. They felt that as soon as the letter was published I would jump on the band wagon. The truth of the matter, however, is that my statements were made out of a strong conviction, and the release of the letter has done nothing to calm the apprehension I have about the letter's authenticity. At the present time I feel almost alone. Even the Mormon historians accept the letter, and I am under a great deal of pressure to get into step with the scholars. . . .

Before making any final decision with regard to the letter's authenticity, I would like to do further research with regard to a number of items. For instance, I would like to find out if there is any evidence that someone owned the letter before Lyn Jacobs. . . .

In conclusion I should say that although I have serious doubts about the Salamander letter, I still stand behind the thesis we presented in *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*. I feel that there is very good evidence linking Joseph Smith to magic.

In the same issue (page 13), we stated that if "the letter is a forgery, one is almost forced to the conclusion that it would have to be a recent forgery." We also stated that "it is unlikely that anyone but a Mormon could have had the knowledge necessary to commit such a forgery." The following comments appeared on pages 9 and 10:

One problem with allowing the suppression of important information concerning the source of discoveries is that it could encourage forgers to enter the Mormon document business. Since there is already a great deal of money involved in these transactions . . . there would be a temptation to create such documents and palm them off on unsuspecting collectors by merely saying: "I obtained these from a collector in \_\_\_\_\_." If we allow this type of thing to go on, it will certainly encourage the forgery of Mormon documents. Since

these documents have an important affect on the religious beliefs of many people, it is crucial that their pedigree be revealed to historians. . . . This whole business of secret dealings with the Church is very disturbing. While dealers have a right to operate in this way, from a historian's point of view it is deplorable. We can not see any real reason for all the secrecy that surrounds these transactions.

## A CONFRONTATION

In the *Messenger* for August 1985, pages 7-8, I indicated that "Lyn Jacobs has stubbornly refused to tell where he obtained" the Salamander letter. On August 24, 1985, Sandra and I had the very rare opportunity to speak with both Mark Hofmann and Lyn Jacobs. After Marvin Hill had given his presentation at the Sunstone Theological Symposium, we found Hofmann and Jacobs at the back of the room. Both men treated us politely and answered some of our questions. I asked Hofmann and Jacobs if it were true that the letter was obtained for only about \$20 from a postmark collector. They indicated that this was true. Since Marvin Hill had indicated that Jacobs may have purchased the letter from a collector by the name of Elwin Doubleday, I asked Mr. Jacobs if this were true. He replied that it was not true. He said he had purchased it from another collector and that collector could not remember where he got the document from. I asked him for the name of the collector from whom he obtained it. His reply was that he could not tell me because the collector had told him not to reveal his name. This, of course, did not ring true. Why would a collector who saw no value in the letter except that it had an early postmark worth \$20 ask that his name not be revealed? Common sense told me that a collector would be happy to have other people know that he had such letters for sale. At any rate, Mr. Hofmann then stated that he had been the one who directed Jacobs to the collector. Hofmann, however, did not reveal the name of the collector.

I then asked Mr. Hofmann some very pointed questions that related to the Salamander letter. The answers he gave did not satisfy me, and I felt that Mr. Hofmann knew that I did not believe what he was saying. At one point he looked at me with a sad expression on his face. He seemed to be deeply troubled. It was almost as if he was trying to say, "Please believe what I am telling you." Unfortunately, I could not believe his answers. They did not square with the facts that I already knew. Although this confrontation was very unpleasant for all of us, I must say that neither Hofmann or Jacobs showed any sign of vindictiveness.

It is reported that at a get-together which occurred late one night after a meeting of the Sunstone Symposium,

Hofmann and Jacobs talked freely about the sale of both the 1825 letter and the Salamander letter. The letter attributed to Joseph Smith was sold to President Hinckley for a large sum of money. At that time Hinckley was supposed to have said that it would never see the light of day again. Later the Salamander letter was offered to Hinckley for \$100,000 which was to be paid for in one hundred dollar bills. Hinckley rejected the offer. He said that word had leaked out about the 1825 letter and that the General Authorities had decided against continuing to buy up the documents. The Salamander letter was later sold to Steven Christensen for \$45,000.

Although I do not know if this report is accurate in all its details, the part about payment in cash reminded me of a conversation I had with Mr. Hofmann on December 15, 1983. At that time Hofmann told me that when he was attempting to place a telephone call late one night, he heard a strange voice on the line which said something like, "Why is he calling out so late?" He said that he feared that agents of the IRS might be tapping his phone because of a problem he was having with them. They were apparently disturbed that he was involved in secret deals which could not be traced with any records. Hofmann said he told them that this was the way that some people he dealt with operated and that the IRS would have to take his word as to the amount of money that exchanged hands in these transactions. Mr. Hofmann did not acknowledge any crime on his part nor did he tell me whether these untraceable deals involved the Mormon church.

## POLICE INVESTIGATION

When I began my investigation into the documents and activities of Mark Hofmann, I realized I was taking a very unpopular course. Mormon scholars felt that I was unjustly persecuting Mr. Hofmann. The only one who gave me much help was A. J. Simmonds, manuscripts librarian at Utah State University. Ironically, Mr. Simmonds, like Sandra and myself, is also a non-Mormon.

Although I had no reason to fear that Mr. Hofmann was dangerous, I knew that any time a person tries to uncover fraud there is some danger of retaliation. If the police are correct in their theory that Mr. Hofmann is guilty of murder, Sandra and I may have been in real danger. Although I do not want to pass judgment until I have heard all the facts, if Hofmann is the type of man who would engage in bombings, then the thing that probably saved us from his wrath was that hardly anyone believed my findings. While I have uncovered some important circumstantial evidence indicating fraud, I could not find the hard evidence necessary to convince historians. In the

pamphlet *Mr. Boren and the White Salamander*, I told of my frustration:

In my investigation I have been seriously handicapped by secrecy. . . . If I had investigative power like the FBI or could subpoena documents, . . . I could force Lyn Jacobs or Mark Hofmann to reveal where the Salamander letter was obtained, . . .

By the summer of 1985 I felt I had almost exhausted all my human resources. Although I had prayed about the matter from the beginning, I began to fervently seek God's help. Then a remarkable thing happened. A young man felt the burden of prayer and began to pray with me. He became extremely interested in my problem with the documents and prayed earnestly that God would just open up the way so that the truth about the matter would be revealed

In my wildest imagination I would never have thought that an investigation would be set into motion by the explosion of three bombs. Although I do not believe that God planned the bombings (they undoubtedly came from the wicked heart of man), the result seemed to me to be a real answer to prayer. While I had previously complained because I did not have "investigative power like the FBI," now the federal bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Salt Lake City Police Department and the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office are all working together on a major investigation. Mr. Hofmann's car and home were thoroughly searched and many documents were confiscated by the police. The resulting investigation into Hofmann's activities has revealed fraudulent activities on his part.

### LOST 116 PAGES

Immediately after the police searched Mark Hofmann's home the question of forgery began to arise. The *Salt Lake Tribune* for October 18, 1985, reported:

In fact, Sheriff Hayward and other police officials speculate that Mr. Hofmann may have been involved in a historical document forging scam in which he sold hundreds of thousands of dollars in forged papers to collectors and high LDS Church officials. . . .

Mr. Hofmann's possession of the white-salamander letter, the purported McClellin journals and numerous other documents . . . does raise some interesting questions, the sheriff said—the first being, "Why him?"

"Where does he get them? All of the sudden there's this one guy who keeps coming up with these things, worth all that money. . . .

"I know for a fact that 50 of us couldn't find these

papers in 50 years if we were looking for them," the sheriff said. "But he keeps coming up with them." . . .

Also Thursday, detectives continued to seek and execute various search warrants in hopes of gathering more evidence. Police returned to his house with another search warrant after retrieving some evidence Wednesday night. Among that material, which included blank parchmentlike paper, personal documents and clothing, were items which Sheriff Hayward said "that there is speculation that these things could be used in forging documents."

The *Deseret News*, October 18, 1985, reported that "When police found evidence of forging in Hofmann's possession, the case took another turn." On October 20, the *Salt Lake Tribune* revealed the following:

Forgery, according to Chief Willoughby, continues to be a prime consideration as a motive. . . .

Speculation that the controversial 1830 Mormon "white salamander" letter . . . is a forgery has prompted the church to send that letter to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's laboratory for authentication. Some of the voluminous documents found in both Mr. Hofmann's home and his burned out car . . . also will be taken to the FBI lab for tests.

After I began having trouble accepting the text of the Salamander letter, I got the uncomfortable feeling that it and other discoveries Mark Hofmann was connected with might be preparing historians to receive a forgery of the "book of Lehi." This manuscript of 116 pages was supposed to have been lost by Martin Harris. This was to be the opening portion of the Book of Mormon. After its loss, Joseph Smith translated the book of Nephi to take its place. There has always been a great deal of speculation as to what was contained in this manuscript. As far as I am aware, no one knew anything about the contents of the missing pages until Hofmann and Jacobs discovered a letter which was supposedly written by Joseph Smith's mother, Lucy Smith, on January 23, 1829. As early as 1982, Mr. Hofmann publicly mentioned that he had "spent thousands of dollars in the pursuit" of the "lost 116 manuscript pages" (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 18).

Joseph Smith claimed that Martin Harris was working as his scribe when he dictated the 116 pages which were lost. The handwriting, therefore, on these pages would have to match that of Martin Harris. (It is reasonable to believe, of course, that other scribes could have written some of the pages.) Up until Mark Hofmann arrived on the scene, there was hardly anything that one could compare Harris' handwriting against. There were a few signatures attributed to him, but no letters actually written in his



own hand. Moreover, there was not even a dictated letter which bore Martin Harris' signature. On October 5, 1982, however, the Mormon church issued a press release which told of the discovery of a letter Harris was supposed to have dictated to his son. The church claimed that it was actually signed by Martin Harris himself. From what I can learn, the letter came through the hands of Mark Hofmann. Its pedigree, however, was never revealed. Although the signature on the 1873 letter looks remarkably like one Harris penned in 1829, I could not help but think that it was too good for a man who was eighty-nine years old and going blind. I checked the 1873 signature against a signature written in 1871 on Harris' application for a U.S. Military pension and found it to be much better. Below is a comparison of the signatures of 1829, 1871 and 1873.

1829      *Martin Harris*

1871      *Martin Harris*

1873      *Martin Harris*

In the *Messenger* for Jan. 1985, page 10, I indicated that the "1871 signature does raise some questions about the signature on the 1873 letter, . . ." I thought that this was very suspicious. In any case, the 1873 letter was very favorable to the church. This letter seemed to prepare historians for the Salamander letter which followed right on its heels. The Salamander letter not only bore the signature of Martin Harris, but the entire text as well was supposed to be in the hand of Joseph Smith's early scribe. With the authentication of Harris' handwriting in the Salamander letter, the stage was well prepared for the ultimate discovery—i.e., the book of Lehi. It is conceivable that this manuscript might be worth millions of dollars. Although we cannot confirm it, it has been reported that at least some pages purporting to be from the book of Lehi were found by police in Hofmann's possession. It has also been claimed that there were sheets of paper found which appeared to have been used to practice the handwriting of Martin Harris and Emma Smith. (The reader can imagine how embarrassing it would be if a 20th century sheet of paper contained handwriting that matched that found on the Salamander letter.) If attempts to imitate Emma Smith's handwriting have indeed been found, it would fit very well with the idea of a plan to forge the 116 pages. It is believed that Emma Smith was Joseph Smith's scribe for some of the first pages of this manuscript. It would be

very convincing to have the manuscript begin in Emma Smith's handwriting and then switch to that of Martin Harris. With respect to Emma Smith's handwriting, it is interesting to note that the police found a photograph of her handwriting in Hofmann's possession and it was traced to a museum owned by Mrs. Wilford C. Wood. This photograph would prove helpful to anyone trying to imitate Emma Smith's handwriting.

It appears that the police feel that there may be something to the theory that Hofmann was planning a forgery of the book of Lehi. The *Deseret News* for October 23, 1985, reported:

One of the scenarios Willoughby admitted police are seriously investigating is the possibility that the Martin Harris letter, . . . may be forged and that it may be part of an elaborate scheme to set up a much larger forgery or scam. . . .

Police are investigating the possibility that the letter was forged by someone who later intended to forge pages from the 116 pages of missing Book of Mormon manuscript, known as the Book of Lehi—something police say would be worth millions of dollars. Many of those 116 pages are in Harris' handwriting. . . .

"If (Hofmann) should just happen to come up with pages from the missing manuscript, they would be tested for authenticity against the Salamander letter," said one police source. If the letter was forged, the manuscript "would be easier to authenticate. It would be worth millions."

Police say physical evidence has been recovered that may corroborate that theory.

"You bet your bottom dollar," said Willoughby when asked if police were seriously considering such a scenario.

As I will later show, Hugh Pinnock, of the First Quorum of Seventy in the Mormon church, admitted that he helped Mark Hofmann obtain a loan for \$185,000 from First Interstate Bank so he could obtain the McLellin collection. Both Hofmann and Pinnock were interested in the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon. Pinnock, in fact, had a lead with regard to the 116 pages which Hofmann was supposed to have been following up on. Mr. Pinnock claimed that "during the years of 1973 to 1976" he served as "mission president in Pennsylvania" While he was there, "two of our missionaries claimed to have traced out a lady that said she had them, or that her brother had them" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985). The mission president who succeeded Pinnock "did some looking around for those 116 pages" but never found them. Hofmann was supposed to have picked up the trail after he found the Anthon transcript. In any case, it is possible that Hofmann could have discussed these missing pages with Pinnock. While I do not know that the book of Lehi had

anything to do with the murders, this manuscript would be worth a tremendous amount of money. This, combined with the secrecy that would surround its transfer to the Mormon church, could very easily lead to disagreements and perhaps even to violence.

### MCLELLIN DECEPTION

In the last issue of the *Messenger* we told that Mark Hofmann claimed he had obtained some documents known as the McLellin collection. He had mentioned these documents to Sandra on August 23, 1984. Four months later we received an anonymous letter (postmarked December 20, 1984). The letter contained this information:

I am writing you anonymously to tip you off to a cover up by the Mormon church and the document discover[er] Mark Hoffmann.

A few days ago Mark showed me the original actual Egyptian Papyrus of the round facsimile of the P. of G. P. It is in many pieces and is pasted onto a piece of heavy paper. There are pencil and ink drawings filling in the missing parts. There is another square piece of papyrus pasted on the same piece of paper. Mark told me not to tell anyone about this. He told me it would never be seen again after the church go[t] it. He is keeping a large color photograph.

This letter has been turned over to the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office. We do not know whether it was a genuine letter from someone concerned about the suppression of the document or whether it was written by Hofmann or one of his friends for the purpose of giving publicity to the McLellin collection and driving the price up.

In an article published by the *Salt Lake Tribune* on July 6, 1985, Dawn Tracy reported:

Mark Hofmann . . . said he located a collection—including Facsimile No. 2—that at one time belonged to William McLellin, an early Mormon apostle.

While we found evidence from letters written between 1872 and 1901 that Apostle McLellin did have a collection of documents, in the *Messenger* for August 1985, we wrote:

So far we have not found anything concerning McLellin having the original of Fac. No. 2. Although it has been alleged that McLellin may have stolen it from Joseph Smith in 1838, there is evidence that Smith still had it [in] 1842.

Although I cannot say for certain that Mark Hofmann never had any of Apostle McLellin's papers, his claims now appear to be doubtful. Furthermore, there is strong

evidence that he fabricated at least a portion of the so-called McLellin collection. As strange as it may seem, Kenneth Rendell, the man who authenticated the Salamander letter, appears to be the strongest witness against Hofmann with regard to this attempt to deceive.

Just before the bombings occurred, I had become very suspicious that Hofmann did not really have the McLellin collection. I felt that the documents which he claimed to have might be forgeries. I knew, however, that it would be very difficult to forge the fragments of the Joseph Smith Papyri which Hofmann claimed were part of the McLellin collection. I decided to discuss the matter with the Mormon Egyptologist Edward H. Ashment. I told Mr. Ashment that we would have to be very careful about accepting the original of Fac. No. 2. I theorized that it might be possible for a person to obtain a real Egyptian hypocephalus that looked somewhat like the one Joseph Smith used for Fac. No. 2 in the Book of Abraham. The areas which did not agree with the drawing could be broken off or damaged. In this way, I reasoned, another piece of papyrus could be palmed off for the one owned by Smith. Mr. Ashment agreed that it might be possible to buy a hypocephalus, although it would be rather expensive.

While I do not know whether Mr. Hofmann ever actually obtained a hypocephalus, evidence now shows that he did, in fact, obtain some pieces of genuine Egyptian papyrus which he tried to palm off as part of the Joseph Smith Papyri in the McLellin collection. According to the *Deseret News*, October 28, 1985, Kenneth Rendell "said he also sent two pieces of Egyptian papyri to Hofmann on a \$10,500 consignment. . . . He said he found it strange that Hofmann wanted something from the first or second-century A. D. containing hieratic script rather than hieroglyphics, which are much more desirable to collectors. He said Hofmann stressed how secret this transaction had to be." The *Salt Lake Tribune* for October 28, 1985, printed this revealing information:

Detectives removed pieces of papyrus from Mr. Hofmann's home and burned-out automobile. Officers, acting on a search warrant, also took a piece of papyrus from a safe deposit box used by Mr. Christensen. . . .

Detectives believe that Mr. Hofmann, 31, fragmented either one of both of the 30-inch by 9-inch papyrus scrolls lent to him on consignment by Mr. Rendell in mid-September, and then showed the pieces to various investors, telling them that they belonged to the missing McLellin papers. Some investigators feel that Mr. Christensen, hired as an "authenticator" of these documents by an anonymous buyer, may have told Mr. Hofmann he intended to go to Mr. Rendell for authentication of the Egyptian script, thus threatening to expose the scam.

The papyrus was apparently broken in such a way that it would make it very difficult for an Egyptologist to read the text. This, of course, would help disguise where it came from. In any case, the *Deseret News* for October 31, 1985, reveals that Mark Hofmann took the fragmented papyrus to the very man with whom I had discussed the possibility of a papyrus switch:

Ashment said he was first contacted by Hofmann in July about the papyri fragments in the McLellin papers. Ashment later photographed one fragment during a meeting in the Church History Library. But Ashment said the fragment did not match previous descriptions of the four papyri purported to be in the McLellin papers. . . . Rendell said the fact that the papyrus was fragmented suggested some sort of illicit dealings. He said there could be no legitimate reason for fragmenting the papyrus because the individual pieces would be worth dramatically less than the whole, which he valued at about \$6,000.

“The document in pieces is worth 10 percent of what it is as a complete unit,” Rendell said. “The piece that now remains is worth well under \$1,000.”

It is certainly ironic that the very man who authenticated the Salamander letter would turn out to be the one who speaks of fraudulent dealings with regard to the McLellin collection. Mr. Rendell’s statement that breaking up the papyrus greatly diminishes its value is certainly true in any regular transaction. In Mr. Hofmann’s case, however, this would not necessarily be true. That fact that he represented it as a part of the Joseph Smith Papyri greatly enhanced its value. Wade Lillywhite claimed that Mark Hofmann contacted him before the killings and “offered to sell for \$100,000 a papyrus document purported to be an ancient papyrus facsimile from the McLellin papers” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 22, 1985). From this it would appear that Mr. Hofmann was greatly inflating the price of common Egyptian papyri by claiming it was part of the McLellin collection. Brent Metcalfe, who was doing some work for Mark Hofmann, acknowledged that Hofmann even deceived him by telling him “that the papyrus once belonged to Apostle McLellin.

## CHURCH INVOLVEMENT

Up until the time of the bombings, Hofmann’s friends were leaking out all kinds of information concerning what was in the McLellin collection and how damaging it would be to the Mormon church if it fell into the hands of the public. The church leaders apparently became very concerned that the material be suppressed.

The *Chicago Tribune* for October 25, 1985, printed this interesting information:

SALT LAKE CITY—After questioning a leading authority on rare documents, police here are piecing together a theory that the wave of bombings that hit this city last week was part of a daring scheme to conceal an attempted blackmail of the Mormon church itself.

The scenario revolves around a plan to threaten the church leadership with a collection of artifacts deliberately concocted to appear particularly damaging to the credibility of Mormonism’s founder, Joseph Smith.

After the bombings occurred, a man by the name of Alvin Rust said that Mark Hofmann told him that he was selling the papers to Gordon B. Hinckley, of the First Presidency of the Mormon church:

Alvin Rust, who gave Mr. Hofmann \$150,000 to purchase the documents last April, said Mr. Hofmann told him that President Hinckley had agreed to buy the documents for \$300,000. . . .

It is apparent from Mr. Rust’s comments and the police investigation that, at some point, negotiations were under way between Mr. Hofmann and the church—either through a general authority or an intermediary buyer—that the LDS Church was attempting to buy the collection, a number of affidavits, letters and ancient Egyptian papyrus that may contain potential embarrassing materials for the church. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 23, 1985)

The Mormon church held a news conference on October 23 in which Gordon B. Hinckley admitted that Mark Hofmann had approached him about the McLellin collection but said that Hofmann “wanted to donate the collection to the church. There was no discussion of our purchasing it” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985). However this may be, Mr. Hofmann not only obtained \$150,000 from Mr. Rust, but he also approached the church claiming that he needed \$185,000 to buy the collection. Apostle Dallin H. Oaks revealed the following:

In late June, Mark Hofmann and Steve Christensen told Elder Pinnock that Hofmann had an option to buy the McLellin collection from a man in Texas for about \$185,000. . . .

Elder Pinnock asked me if I thought the church would loan Mark Hofmann \$185,000 for this purpose. I said, emphatically not. President Hinckley was in Europe at the time of this conversation. No one else could or would approve such a transaction . . . to have the church involved in the acquisition of a collection at this time would simply fuel the then current speculation reported

by the press that the church already had something called the McLellin collection or was trying to acquire it in order to suppress it. . . . We discussed whether the church would be interested in receiving the collection as a gift. It was my judgment that the church probably would at some future time, but in that event it had to be a genuine gift from a real donor. . . . Elder Pinnock inquired whether it would be appropriate to put him in touch with banking officials. I said I saw no harm in that provided it was clearly understood by all parties that the church was not a party or a guarantor and that Hugh Pinnock was not a party or a guarantor to such a loan. . . . The bank made the loan to Hofmann. Hofmann said he had acquired the McLellin collection in Texas and shipped it to Salt Lake City where it was stored in a safety deposit box. The loan came due and it was not paid by Hofmann. . . . Mark Hofmann at that point said or implied, he would have to sell the collection entirely or a piece at a time. This information reached me sometime in September; . . . Elder Pinnock mentioned at that time that he knew of at least two individuals who might be interested in purchasing the collection. Was there any harm in calling its availability to their attention? . . .

I was later informed that a buyer was interested but he wanted to remain anonymous. . . .

Sometime about the time of October Conference, the potential buyer phoned me. . . . He also asked whether the church would be interested in receiving it as a gift at some future time if he purchased it and later saw fit to give it. I said I supposed so, . . . (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985)

During the press conference, Apostle Oaks was asked the name of the potential buyer. He replied, "He wished to remain anonymous and the police are aware of his identity and I think it would not be ethical for me to make it aware except to say that he is a person who is a member of the church" (*Ibid.*). In a memorandum which Oaks distributed to the press, he said that on the day the two murders were committed he met with Hofmann and told him that he was glad that he was selling the collection to someone who was friendly to the church. On October 25, the *Deseret News* reported:

Salt Lake attorney David E. West, . . . was acting for an anonymous client who West said was contacted by Elder Hugh W. Pinnock of the First Quorum of the Seventy . . . several weeks ago and asked to buy the McLellin papers.

"My client didn't have any commitment to donate the collection to the church, although that was his intention in a year or two. But he had a tax consideration. His purpose in purchasing the collection was the tax benefit he expected to get."

The LDS Church was interested in acquiring the McLellin papers . . . but wanted someone to donate them. West said Elder Pinnock approached the client, a Salt Lake man, and asked if he was interested in buying the papers.

It seems obvious that the church wanted someone to buy the collection and keep it secret for some time. During this period the church leaders could deny that they had it. When the pressure subsided, the anonymous buyer could donate it to the church. Apostle Oaks indicated that the church would probably be interested in receiving the collection "at some future time." After they received the collection, church leaders could still deny that they had bought it. If any McLellin collection ever really existed, it probably would have disappeared into the "black hole" of the First Presidency's vault forever. At the church press conference, Apostle Oaks said that he told Hofmann the McLellin transaction had "been handled on a confidential basis, . . ." (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985). According to *People* magazine, November 4, 1985:

Steve Christensen . . . knew he was wading deeply into intrigue. "I feel like I'm living through an episode of *Miami Vice*," he joked to a friend about a deal he was cutting. Four days later Christensen, 31, was dead . . .

The *Salt Lake Tribune* for October 25, indicated that Christensen wanted the closing of the sale to the anonymous buyer to be handled in a very unusual way with keys to safety deposit boxes being mailed later:

And, Mr. West noted, he did not believe from any conversation with Mr. Christensen that he had yet seen the documents. . . .

Mr. Christensen explained he had paid for safe deposit boxes and that when the deal was closed, the documents would be placed in the boxes and then he would mail the keys to the anonymous buyer after payment was made.

"I told him that was not acceptable. How was I to know [the documents] were ever put in the boxes?" he said.

About seven hours after Steven Christensen was murdered, Mark Hofmann met with Apostle Dallin Oaks. They discussed the possibility of completing the transaction with the anonymous buyer:

Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Council of the Twelve, said in a memorandum about his meeting with Mr. Hofmann the day of the homicides that he had a conversation "from a potential buyer" referred to him by Elder Hugh W. Pinnock, . . .

Elder Oaks also suggested to Mr. Hofmann that he “ought to get in touch with the buyer’s attorney, who undoubtedly would be wondering what would be happening in view of the news reports about Christensen’s death,” and reminded Mr. Hofmann that another person would have to be found to verify the authenticity of the documents—a task that was to be Mr. Christensen’s, according to Mr. West and the church reports. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 25, 1985)

In the Mormon church’s press conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley said that the church has a “mandate” to obtain important historical documents. Apostle Oaks, however, indicated that the church was “intent on not getting” the McLellin collection:

FRED MOSS: “Fred Moss with KBYU News. I just have a question. Why is the church so intent on getting the papers? Is it to secure them in the right hands so that they are not taken advantage of and make the church look bad? And where does the money come to purchase these letters?”

ELDER OAKS: “Can I answer the first part . . .”

PRESIDENT HINCKLEY: “Yes, go ahead.”

ELDER OAKS: “Again, why, you say, is the church so intent on getting the papers? I thought it was clear from my statement that the church was very intent on not getting the papers, so that there would be no misunderstanding about this. Could you rephrase that question?” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, Oct. 27, 1985)

From all I can learn about the McLellin transaction, it appears obvious that while church leaders may have been “intent on not getting” the McLellin collection in a way that would become known to the public, they were working behind the scenes to see that the papers were acquired secretly. On November 15, 1985, KUTV News did a story concerning the discovery of Steven Christensen’s diary. Christensen was quoted as saying the following about the McLellin collection: “Elder Pinnock has saved the Church time, money and effort in countering an avalanche of negative publicity should the collection have fallen into the wrong hands.”

Just two months before the bombings we had printed some important information about the purported McLellin collection and condemned Mr. Hofmann’s attitude with regard to the church suppressing documents. We said that this behavior was “deplorable, to say the least” (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, August 1985, page 10). In the *Los Angeles Times* for November 8, 1985, we read:

According to Flynn, who often worked with Hofmann on deals, church officials and Hofmann had heard that anti-Mormon groups were “hot on the trail” of the McLellin Collection. Flynn said Hofmann told him the papers were being held by a Texas bank as loan collateral.

“I was told by Mark that President Hinckley was anxious to get this stuff,” Flynn said in an interview. “Evidently, they had caught wind the ‘antis’ were after it, and they were anxious to get it here to Salt Lake as soon as possible.”

About the middle of November it was reported to me that KSL, a television station owned by the Mormon church, had run a brief story at noon concerning Hugh Pinnock offering Mark Hofmann an armored car, an airplane and cash to obtain documents. I discussed this matter with an employee of KSL, who told me that the information came from the diary of Steven Christensen. Mr. Christensen claimed that when Mr. Pinnock said he would provide an armored car and an airplane, Mark Hofmann declined the offer saying that this would not be necessary. Pinnock said that since the transaction was to be made on a day when the banks were to be closed, the individual receiving the cashier’s check would not be able to call and verify that the check was legitimate. He wondered, therefore, if Hofmann would prefer to take cash from a fund that was available. Hofmann, however, thought that this would not be necessary. The fact that Hugh Pinnock felt that an armored car might be necessary to carry out the transaction shows that a large amount of money must have been involved. I would certainly like to know more about this fund.

In any case, if the church leaders had not continued to engage in secret dealings with Hofmann, they would not have found themselves in the embarrassing situation they are in today. The McLellin fraud cost Hugh Pinnock a great deal of money. He claimed that although he was not “legally obligated to the bank,” he felt morally responsible to pay back the balance of the \$185,000 loan that Hofmann owed to First Interstate Bank. On October 26, the *Deseret News* announced that he had repaid the loan out of his own money. This, of course, avoided the sticky situation of the bank taking Hofmann to court and the embarrassing testimony that might follow. It is also obvious that neither Pinnock nor the church would want Hofmann to become an enemy. Alvin Rust, the coin dealer who also lent Hofmann \$150,000 to buy the McLellin collection, filed a lawsuit in which he claimed “he was defrauded of \$132,000 in the deal for the McLellin papers” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, November 15, 1985). Hofmann had repaid Mr. Rust \$17,900, leaving a balance of \$132,100.

## RUSH TO OAKS’ OFFICE

That the Mormon church was involved in a highly secret operation (or operations) with Mark Hofmann became obvious at the church’s press conference. Apostle

Oaks claimed that after the bombings began, three different men came to the Mormon Church Administration Building enquiring about what they should tell police:

. . . just before 3 p.m., Mark Hofmann came to the Church Administration Building and asked for Elder Pinnock, who was out at that time. . . . Hofmann came to my office and said he thought the police would question him. What should he say when they questioned him? And I said, “You should simply tell them the truth. You don’t have any reason to believe that this bombing has anything to do with you, do you? And simply tell them the truth.” And then, when he seemed to be questioning whether we should tell them about the McLellin collection, I said, “Look. That’s been handled on a confidential basis, but there’s a murder investigation under way. You should tell the police everything you know and answer every question—and I intend to do the same.” . . .

On Thursday, the following day, Shannon Flynn came to the Church Administration Building . . . I met with Flynn . . . In brief, Flynn wanted to know what he should say if he was questioned, and I told him to tell the truth, just as I had told Hofmann.”

On Friday, Alvin Rust came to the Church Office Building . . . He said, “I know some things. I’ve already talked to the police, but I know some more things.” And I said, “Whatever you haven’t told the police, tell them. Give them everything.” . . . (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985)

Alvin Rust was rather upset about Apostle Oaks’ comment concerning him:

“I didn’t run to the church asking what to say to the police,” said Mr. Rust. “I wanted to know about the McLellin papers. I love the church but Elder Oaks’ statement sounded funny.” (*Ibid.*, October 24, 1985)

In any case, the fact that people would have to seek out an Apostle to know what to tell the police certainly reveals that there were secret activities going on. On November 18, the *Salt Lake Tribune* revealed that it was learned that church security officers had been a step ahead of the detectives in interviewing some of the people:

Early on, when it was learned that LDS Church officials had dealt with one of the victims, the prime suspect and key witness in the killings, the investigators’ lives suddenly became much more difficult. It was learned that some of the people detectives wanted to talk to had been interviewed first by church security officers, and nobody really knew how to approach church general authorities with questions about murder.

The *Salt Lake Tribune* for October 21, 1985, reported that “Friends of Mr. Hofmann have said he did regular business with President Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the church’s First Presidency.” At the press conference, President Hinckley admitted that the church had acquired “40-some documents” that came through Mark Hofmann:

I first met Mark W. Hofmann in April of 1980 when he was brought to my office by officers of our Historical Department. . . . he had found what has come to be known as the “Anthon Manuscript” in Joseph Smith’s handwriting. . . .

On March 17, 1981, our Historical Department people again came with him to my office with the transcript of the blessing given by Joseph Smith to his son. . . .

Since that time, Mr. Hofmann has sold various documents to the church, . . . The church has acquired by purchase, donation, or trade 40-some documents, some of relatively little importance, and some of significance. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985)

The *Los Angeles Times*, November 8, 1985, claimed that “most” of these documents have not been made public. At the press conference, Gordon B. Hinckley said that he bought Joseph Smith’s letter to Josiah Stowell from Mr. Hofmann. In the last issue of the *Messenger* we told how this letter, purported to have been written by Joseph Smith in 1825, was suppressed for two years by the church. The *Tribune* for October 20, 1985, reported that even the Mormon Archivist was not told about Hinckley making this purchase:

Don Schmidt, retired LDS Church archivist, said members of the First Presidency didn’t tell him or church historians about the 1825 letter. Nor did they ask him or anyone in his department to authenticate the letter.

It has been alleged that Gordon B. Hinckley bought the 1825 letter in his own name so that the church itself could deny ownership of it. Hinckley was asked about this matter at the press conference:

RICK SHENKMAN: Second thing is, there has been speculation that President Hinckley, that you personally were buying documents from Mark Hofmann, either out of your own funds or using the church funds. Did you in your negotiations with Hofmann ever personally acquire documents from him and were any of the payments ever made in cash?

PRESIDENT HINCKLEY: The payments were made by check and they are fully authenticated, receipted for, on two occasions. Two items. Nothing like the figures you have been hearing today. Relatively small. What’s that?

REPORTER: Excuse me, can you tell us what items were paid for from Hofmann?

PRESENT HINCKLEY: One was the Joseph Smith, Sr. letter to Josiah Stowell and the other, I do not remember.

REPORTER: Can you tell us the price of the letter?

PRESIDENT HINCKLEY: Well, I don't know that I'm going to tell you the price, but I'm going to tell you that it was nothing like the kind of figures that you've talked of this morning. Nothing like that. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985)

If it should turn out that some of Hofmann's documents are forgeries, the Mormon church will suffer great embarrassment. Church leaders not only gave Hofmann money, but they also traded some of the church's own "historical materials" for his documents (see statement of Gordon B. Hinckley in the issue of the *Tribune* cited above).

### "DEEP THROAT"

In the *Messenger* for June 1985, we stated that "The 'Salamandergate' cover-up even has its own 'Deep Throat'—that mysterious and unidentified person who had access to Nixon's secrets and leaked them to the press." This individual claims that he somehow got access to the first history of the Mormon church written by Book of Mormon witness Oliver Cowdery and that this history tells that it was Joseph Smith's brother Alvin who first discovered the gold plates of the Book of Mormon through the use of a seer stone. Alvin, however, was driven away by a taunting salamander. Subsequently, the salamander appeared twice to Joseph Smith. Although the person who gave this report does not say that the salamander was white or that it was transformed into a spirit, it has been used as evidence to support the Salamander letter. The argument, of course, is that the forger could not have known that the Mormon church had an extremely important document mentioning salamanders. Unfortunately, however, from what I can learn it seems very likely that Mark Hofmann and Lyn Jacobs would have had this information prior to the time that the Salamander letter appeared, and it is even possible that one of these two men could have been the mysterious "Deep Throat" who was interviewed by the *Los Angeles Times*. While some Mormons have tried to deny the existence of the Oliver Cowdery History, Joseph Fielding Smith, who became the 10th president of the church, claimed that the church had it. *The Oregonian* for May 21, 1985, reported:

Church spokesman Jerry Cahill said that Cowdery's history had been in the church's possession since around 1900 and probably is locked away in the private vault of the governing First Presidency. . . .

" . . . Obviously, it's in the possession of the church, but what shelf it is on I don't know," he said.

I have found that as early as 1981 Hofmann and Jacobs were trying to obtain information concerning the contents of the First Presidency's vault. During the same year, Hofmann claimed that there was a leak of material out of the vault. By 1983 he privately boasted that he had even seen the "seer stone" which is stored in the vault. During the same year Hofmann discussed the Oliver Cowdery History with a friend. In the last issue of the *Messenger*, we wrote:

There is evidence that Mark Hofmann has had special access to the First Presidency's vault. (As we pointed out earlier, only the most trusted individuals can see documents from that vault.) On September 28, 1982, the *7th East Press* reported that since the discovery of the Anthon transcript, Hofmann has "enjoyed privileged access to otherwise restricted Church archive material, including the First Presidency's vault. One reason for this privileged access, Hofmann thinks, is the fact that 'I am not a historian. I'm not going to write an expose of Mormonism.'"

Through his discoveries and knowledge of documents, Mr. Hofmann has worked himself into the innermost circle of Mormon historians.

To my knowledge, only Brent Metcalfe and *Los Angeles Times* reporter John Dart know the identity of "Deep Throat." Mr. Metcalfe says that he is one of his friends. While we know that Hofmann is a close friend of Metcalfe, this is not conclusive because Metcalfe has other friends who could have gained access to the vault. John Dart has agreed not to reveal the identity of the man. Therefore, he would neither confirm nor deny that it was Hofmann or Jacobs. If further investigation should establish that Hofmann, Jacobs or even a close friend of these two men is "Deep Throat," then we would have to take a serious look at the possibility that there was a very treacherous scheme to defraud the Mormon leaders by using their own documents. Deep Throat could have obtained access to the Cowdery History and found that it mentioned salamanders. This, of course, would have provided the important element needed to produce the Salamander letter. Since some of the top Mormon leaders and scholars may have been aware that the Cowdery History mentioned salamanders, they would have taken this as evidence that the Salamander letter was authentic. A forger who had access to materials from the First Presidency's vault and the Church Archives would have been in an excellent position to produce blackmail-like documents which the Mormon leaders would be willing to buy up in an effort to save the church from embarrassment.

It could, of course, be argued that the Oliver Cowdery History does not mention salamanders, but if this is the case, why has the church failed to produce it so that the false story about it could be squelched? In any case, there certainly must be something very embarrassing in this history that keeps the church leaders from bringing it to light.

### A COVER-UP

On November 19, 1985, Brent Metcalfe, who worked as a historical researcher for Mark Hofmann appeared on a television show broadcast by KUED. Mr. Metcalfe claimed he had new and important evidence which helped verify the Salamander Letter. This was an inscription found in an 1830 printing of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Although the inscription is neither signed nor dated, Mr. Metcalfe claims that Dean Jesse's preliminary analysis of it demonstrates that it is in the same handwriting that appears in the Salamander Letter. There is a signature at the front of the book, but it is not that of Martin Harris. The signature is that of Nathan Harris. It has been claimed that Nathan was Martin Harris' brother, but I have not found that he had a brother by that name. Martin Harris' father was named Nathan and Martin's brother Emer also had a son by that name. The book has a date of "1833" written at the front and the words "Kirtland, Ohio." Both Martin Harris' father and his nephew were living during the year 1833. In any case, the inscription attributed to Martin Harris reads as follows: "If this book should wander and you this book should find please to kindly remember that what you hold is mine."

It has been claimed that Mormon-owned Deseret Book has had the book since 1971, and that Mark Hofmann could not possibly have had access to it until after the Salamander Letter was discovered. Unfortunately, employees at Deseret Book have been instructed to keep quiet about this book, and therefore I was unable to learn how they knew that Hofmann had no access to it. In any case, Sandra and I had access to a good xerox copy of the inscription for a few minutes and agreed that it is remarkably similar to the handwriting found in the Salamander letter. I am looking forward to obtaining a good clear copy of the inscription so that I can make a more careful comparison.

In the meantime, there are a number of questions that need to be answered. To begin with, if the inscription was really written by Martin Harris, why didn't he sign his name to it? It would be important, also, to know if Martin ever had the book in his possession. The inscription by the unknown hand says, "this book . . . is mine." It is claimed that the book actually came down through Emer

Harris' descendants. Deseret Book is supposed to have the pedigree of the book, but employees refused to provide any information on the subject.

However this may be, if the handwriting in the book is verified to be the same as that found in the Salamander Letter, investigators will have to take a very close look at the book itself to see if there are any signs of foul play. It is known that Mark Hofmann obtained this book from Deseret Book before the bombings. On KUED, Brent Metcalfe said that "Mark had, in fact, purchased the book from Deseret Book who had it as early as 1971 . . ." He also said that "Mark Hofmann was, in fact, involved in the sale of it . . ." One person told us that Hofmann bought the book from Deseret Book in September 1985 and resold it to the Church Historical Department in October 1985. The reader will remember that September was the very month that Hofmann bought the papyrus from Mr. Rendell and broke it up for the purpose of deception. Brent Metcalfe says that employees of Deseret Book recall that the poem "was in the book" before they sold it to Hofmann, but they "didn't pay particular significance to it" because they didn't know "who the handwriting" belonged to. It is clear, then, that nobody knew that the handwriting was of any real significance until after it was obtained by Mark Hofmann. I feel that this whole transaction is very suspicious. If I were a detective, I would want to take a close look at the book to see if a page has been removed or substituted at the back of the book. If there were a number of blank pages at the back of the book, one could remove the page with the poem on it and rewrite it on the next page in a handwriting like that found in the Salamander Letter. If there were no blank pages following the poem, it would be possible to obtain another old copy of the *Book of Common Prayer* and substitute a page. Moreover, it would be possible to substitute the entire book and add in the Nathan Harris material at the front of the book. A good forger would make the substitute copy look just like the original. The poem, of course, would have the same words, but the writing would be changed to look like that in the Salamander Letter. It is doubtful that anyone who had seen the original book would remember what the original handwriting looked like. The forger, of course, would not be able to add the signature of Martin Harris after the poem because it would give the whole scheme away. It would, however, at least give the impression that handwriting that looked like that in the Salamander letter had been found in a book which had a pedigree which could be traced to Harris' family. I do not, of course, know that this is what happened, but I feel that in view of what Mark Hofmann did to the papyrus, we must take a hard look at everything that passed through his hands.



There is something else that I feel I must relate which casts a very bad light on the new discovery. That is that both Mark Hofmann and Brent Metcalfe previously claimed that there was a Book of Mormon inscribed with the longest known sample of Martin Harris' handwriting and also bearing his signature underneath it. Why, I ask, would they use an unsigned poem if an inscription bearing Harris' signature had been located?

This inscription was originally mentioned by Mark Hofmann himself months before the Salamander Letter was supposed to have been discovered. The inscription was reported to have been found in an early edition of the Book of Mormon printed in England. Mr. Hofmann mentioned this matter to a scholar on May 8, 1983. This fact was recorded on a piece of paper that very day, and this piece of paper is still in existence. The remarkable thing about the conversation is that Mark Hofmann mentioned the contents of the inscription as containing a statement that Martin Harris had printed the Book of Mormon with his own money. This is a very important parallel to the Salamander Letter which has Harris writing about "the book of Mormon which I had printed with my own money—"

On December 10, 1983, which was after the discovery of the Salamander Letter, Mark Hofmann spoke to the same man about the inscription and the important parallel to the text of the Salamander Letter. In addition to this information being recorded in a contemporary note, I distinctly remember that it was relayed to me. From that time I looked forward to seeing the purported Martin Harris inscription.

In November 1984, after Brent Metcalfe had worked for Steven Christensen as a historical researcher who was attempting to validate the Salamander letter, he came to my house and tried to convince me that my criticism of the Salamander Letter was of no value because he had in his possession a photocopy of Martin Harris' inscription in the early edition of the Book of Mormon printed in England. Mr. Metcalfe claimed that he had personally compared this with the Salamander Letter and found the handwriting to be identical. In the light of this evidence, he felt that I was foolish to continue criticizing the letter.

When the Mormon History Association met in May 1985, I was expecting Dean Jessee to produce this inscription as his main piece of evidence. Instead, however, he showed slides of samples of Martin Harris' signature. Although he had one document containing four words and a signature supposed to have been written by Martin Harris, he did not use the longest inscription purported to be in Martin Harris' handwriting. I was disturbed that this inscription was missing and asked Brent Metcalfe about it. His reply was something to the

effect that Jessee had not received it in time to include it in his study. I assumed, therefore, that it was going to be used later. After some time had passed, I asked Mr. Metcalfe again why Dean Jessee was still not referring to this inscription. He replied that Jessee felt that it was unwise to use a photocopy. He wanted to see the original book to be certain that it was not a forgery. Metcalfe said he had the information telling of the book's location at his home somewhere and was trying to locate it.

On August 24, 1985, I directly asked Mark Hofmann concerning the inscription. He replied that he had never heard of it. I could not imagine that Hofmann would forget the very best evidence for the authenticity of the Salamander Letter. In any case, the scholar Mr. Hofmann had spoken to on at least two occasions concerning the inscription was present during the conversation. Hofmann evidently remembered that he had told him the story, and his memory started to improve. He said that a man by the name of Jerry Kelly might be able to help me locate the book. Hofmann then asked me how I had learned about the inscription. I told him that Brent Metcalfe had told me he had a photocopy. For just a moment, Hofmann seemed to be angry. He regained his composure, however, and said that Mr. Metcalfe always shared with him but had not told him about the photocopy. I replied that Metcalfe was very reluctant to share anything with me, and yet he had told me about it. Later Metcalfe told me that Hofmann talked to him about his mentioning the photocopy to me. He did not reveal what Hofmann had said.

After the bombings (November 13, 1985), Brent Metcalfe came to our home again and tried to convince me of the authenticity of the Salamander Letter. I reminded him of the conversation we had had before about the Martin Harris inscription in the Book of Mormon. To my surprise (Sandra was also present during the conversation), Mr. Metcalfe completely denied that he had ever told me that he had a photocopy of it or had ever seen the inscription. He said that he was still looking for the notes which told where the original book was located. I was absolutely astounded at his answer. My first conversation with him concerning this subject is indelibly written on my mind. Mr. Metcalfe did, in fact, tell me that he had a photocopy and that he had personally compared it with the Salamander Letter and found that the handwriting was identical. He even spoke to me concerning the identical formation of one of the letters found in both documents. Furthermore, I asked him at that time if I could obtain a copy of his photocopy. His reply was that that would not be possible. His response on November 13, 1985, was also contrary to what he told me in our third conversation on the subject. This was that Dean Jessee had said the photocopy could not be used for comparison. They would

need to obtain the original book. I really do not know what the truth is about this matter. I feel, however, that there are three possible explanations as to why the purported inscription has not been brought to light.

One, that it is a forgery that may not pass the critical examination of experts. Perhaps the proper ink was not used or the signature was not just right. It could even be possible that the inscription did not really appear in a book. All one would have to do is obtain a photocopy of the front portion of an early English printing of the Book of Mormon and then add an inscription on the photocopy. If the photocopy were then recopied, it (the second copy) would give the impression that the inscription was in the original book. If this were the case, no original book could be produced. This might explain why Mark Hofmann was upset that Brent Metcalfe had told me about the photocopy and why he had a talk with Metcalfe about the matter. Hofmann would have known that I would be pressuring him and the researchers to produce the original book so that the inscription could be verified. If no such book existed, it would put Hofmann in an embarrassing position. On the other hand, if the inscription does exist in a book and is a forgery which could be detected, it might destroy the Salamander Letter. The reason for this is that it was supposed to be in existence months prior to the discovery of the Salamander Letter, and there is no way that the forger of the inscription could have known what Harris' handwriting would have looked like. (The reader will remember that Mr. Metcalfe said the handwriting was identical.) It is interesting to note that Mark Hofmann claimed that when he was on his "mission to Bristol, England, I bought several early copies of the Book of Mormon in old bookstores" (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 16).

Two, it is possible, of course, that the inscription is really in a book and that it is a genuine Harris inscription. It could, in fact, have been used as a pattern to forge the Salamander Letter. If this were the case, the reason for suppressing the inscription would be that the larger the sample of real Martin Harris handwriting available to handwriting experts, the more likely they would be to detect the forgery. Writing in *Utah Holiday*, December 1985, page 84, Paul Larsen gave this interesting information:

The most crucial test is handwriting. Given the foregoing, it was the only test that could have actually authenticated the salamander letter—or, in other words, verified that it is what it is purported to be—a letter from Martin Harris. . . . With the salamander letter that presents a problem, since virtually nothing verified as written in Martin Harris's hand is known to exist. . . .

Maureen Casy Owens, a handwriting expert with the Chicago police, and former president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, was asked by Utah Holiday if a page of writing could be authenticated from a comparison signature alone. "No," she responded without hesitation. "It would require a minimum of two pages of the subject's handwriting."

The consensus of handwriting experts contacted by *Utah Holiday* is in unequivocal agreement on the question. In fact, there is, according to those experts, no way to authenticate the text of the document, given the lack of Martin Harris's handwriting.

"I did not authenticate that the document came from Martin Harris's hand," Kenneth Randall now says. "That would have been impossible with what little I had. I didn't even authenticate the signature, even though there were several Harris signatures, because I didn't know for a fact that they were Harris signatures. All my report said was that the handwriting was consistent with the handwriting of the time and that there were no signs of forgery."

Even though Brent Metcalfe is very intelligent and knows a great deal about Mormon documents, he is not a handwriting expert. Mark Hofmann, therefore, could have shown him a photocopy of such an inscription without fear of detection. Turning the inscription over to a handwriting expert, however, would be an entirely different matter.

Three, it is possible that no such inscription ever existed in a Book of Mormon and that Mr. Hofmann never had a photocopy. This explanation would not only cast serious doubt upon the honesty of both Metcalfe and Hofmann, but it would also present a serious problem to those who believe in the authenticity of the Salamander Letter. If the inscription does not really exist, then it is evident that Mark Hofmann was daydreaming about a Martin Harris inscription months before the Salamander letter was even discovered. Strange as it may seem, this imaginary inscription contained the same information about Harris publishing the Book of Mormon with his own money that was discovered later in the Salamander Letter. The serious implications of this matter cannot be ignored. If the inscription does not really exist, then one has to seriously consider the possibility that Mr. Hofmann himself could have created the text of the Salamander letter. It is believed by some that Hofmann's handwriting is too poor to allow him to make a forgery that would pass examination. This may be true, but he had association with at least one man who is reported to be skilled in calligraphy. Furthermore, Hofmann had thousands of dollars to work with and could have hired a real expert to do the job.

Whatever the case may be, it is apparent that what should be the best evidence for the Salamander Letter (if it does, in fact, exist) is being covered up. Instead of bringing forth the signed inscription which also contains an important parallel to the Salamander Letter, Brent Metcalfe and Mark Hofmann have put forth a purported inscription which has neither a signature nor a date. Brent Metcalfe was the only full-time historical researcher who worked for Steven Christensen in authenticating the Salamander Letter. He later worked for Mark Hofmann. Mr. Metcalfe claims that somewhere in his material he has the information concerning the location of the Book of Mormon which has Harris' signed inscription in it. To me it seems incredible that a historical researcher would not spend the time to locate the most important evidence. I feel that both Brent Metcalfe and Mark Hofmann owe us an explanation.

With the questions that are being raised by the investigation of Mark Hofmann, one would think that if the Salamander Letter is really genuine, Lyn Jacobs would now reveal to the public where it came from. Brent Metcalfe, however, says that the more pressure that is put on Jacobs, the more adamant he is in his refusal to reveal the source.

One man I talked to said that the FBI would be able to date the Salamander Letter by the Carbon 14 method and find out exactly when it was written. An FBI agent, however, stated that this was impossible. The plus or minus factor is too large to provide any meaningful results when a letter only dates from the 19th century. In his article in *Utah Holiday*, Paul Larsen has presented some very revealing information concerning the authentication of the Salamander Letter:

How specifically, then, can testing of paper and ink be used to date a document?

"Not very," says Salt Lake forensic document examiner George Throckmorton, of Independent Forensic Laboratories. . . . "All we can determine with ink and paper is if they are consistent with what was used at the time the document was purportedly written. . . ." (*Utah Holiday* has learned that the paper in the salamander letter was a cotton rag, very common to that day.)

"Cotton rag paper was introduced to Europe from the Orient in about 1100 A.D.," Throckmorton says. "And it's still available today. So that's basically your age range with the paper. It could have been made one year ago or eight hundred years ago. There's no way to say for sure. If a modern chemical somehow got into it and was detected we would know it was recent."

Bill Crueger, formerly of the Institute of Paper Chemistry, Appleton, Wisconsin, and considered among the most knowledgeable experts in the country on paper,

agrees, "Whatever one man can make another man can, too." The evaluation of paper, Crueger told *Utah Holiday*, is "not black and white. . . . There's a number of people around who make that sort of paper [cotton rag]—it's quite an art. It's not illegal to make it. It's what you do with it afterwards that counts."

Ink is "the same thing" claims Throckmorton. "Your iron gallotanic inks [the kind used in the salamander letter] have been around since the seventh century. And they're still around today. Even if they weren't, they're easy to make." . . .

"All that the ink and paper tests tell you in a case like the salamander letter is whether that document's ink and paper were consistent with the inks and papers of 1830," says Throckmorton. "But, you see, the same ink and paper are also consistent with 1985, since both are still available and in use." . . .

But can't ink and paper be tested for signs of aging? Both take on certain characteristics as they are exposed to the elements over the years. Paper may yellow or brown and become brittle. Iron gallotanic ink oxidizes and sometimes takes on a brown-reddish tint.

"You can [artificially] age them both," says Bill Flynn, a forensic document examiner with the Arizona Crime Laboratory. "You can oxidize something by putting it into a pressurized oxygen atmosphere. That would age both the paper and the ink." Heat can also be used. . . .

Soon an additional verdict may be rendered by the FBI, which has employed . . . one of the most experienced forensic document examiners in the country to look at the letter. He may, of course, be stymied by the same difficulties that plagued Rendell and his team of examiners. (*Utah Holiday*, December 1985, pages 85-86)

## NEW DISCOVERY

As we were preparing to publish this issue of the *Messenger*, the *Salt Lake Tribune* (November 28, 1985) reported: "The *Tribune* has located what may be the McLellin collection, . . ." The discovery of this collection was made possible because of research done by Wesley P. Walters some years ago. Mr. Walters obtained a copy of a letter written by J. L. Traugher on August 21, 1901, from the New York Public Library. Mr. Traugher lived in Mobile, Tyler County, Texas. Michael Marquardt made a typed copy of a portion of this letter, and we printed it on page 10 of the August 1985 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*:

"I have some little manuscript books written by Dr. W. E. McLellin. I also have his journal for parts of the years 18312-3-4-5-6. I have over thirty letters compactly written by Dr. McLellin containing much on the subject of Mormonism."

We felt that it was possible that the collection could have been preserved in the “area of Texas” where Mr. Traugher had lived. Dawn Tracy, a reporter for the *Salt Lake Tribune* followed up the lead furnished by Mr. Traugher’s letter and found at least a portion of the McLellin collection in the possession of his son, H. O. Traugher. While the collection does not appear to have the 1831-36 diaries, it does have the “little manuscript books written by Dr. W. E. McLellin.” I have compared the handwriting of the documents shown in photographs published in the *Tribune* with copies of letters written by McLellin. Although I am no expert, it does appear to me that the documents bear the handwriting of McLellin. Furthermore, the contents of the material appears to be exactly what one would expect from the hand of McLellin. For example, in his list of 55 reasons he could not be a Utah Mormon, McLellin wrote; “35. *Polygamy*. Mrs Joseph Smith, the widow of the Prophet, told me in 1847 that she knew her husband, the Prophet practiced both adultery and polygamy.” This agrees with a letter McLellin wrote to Joseph Smith’s son. The letter is dated July, 1872, and is preserved in the RLDS Archives. This letter agrees in stating that McLellin talked with Joseph Smith’s widow concerning adultery in 1847:

Now Joseph I will relate to you some history, and refer you to your own dear Mother for the truth. You will probably remember that I visited your Mother and family in 1847, and held a lengthy conversation with her, . . . I told her some stories I had heard. And she told me whether I was properly informed. Dr. F. G. Williams . . . told me that at your birth your father committed an act with a Miss Hill—a hired girl. Emma saw him, and spoke to him. He desisted, but Mrs. Smith refused to be satisfied. He called in Dr. Williams, O. Cowdery, and S. Rigdon to reconcile Emma. But she told them just as the circumstances took place. He found he was caught. He confessed humbly, and begged forgiveness. Emma and all forgave him. She told me this story was true!! Again I told her I heard that one night she missed Joseph and Fanny Alger. she went to the barn and saw him and Fanny in the barn together alone. She looked through a crack and saw the transaction!!! She told me this story too was verily true. (Letter from William E. McLellin to Joseph Smith III, dated July 1872, typed copy)

Unlike most of the documents discovered by Mark Hofmann, the documents Mr. Traugher has in his possession have a good pedigree stretching back to McLellin himself. There seems to be no reason, therefore, to doubt that the documents are genuine. While most of the material in H. O. Traugher’s possession is in the handwriting of his father, it still throws important light on the subject because it quotes from the original papers of Apostle McLellin. For instance, Traugher quoted McLellin as questioning the restoration of the priesthood by angels:

I joined the church in 1831. For years I never heard of John the Baptist ordaining Joseph and Oliver. I heard not of James, Peter and John doing so. These things were gotten up in after years in order to sustain them in their false priesthoods. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, December 4, 1985)

The reader will notice the similarity between this quotation and a statement that appears in the letter McLellin wrote to Joseph Smith’s son in 1872.

But as to the story of John, the Baptist ordaining Joseph and Oliver on the day they were baptized: I never heard of it in the church for years, altho I carefully noticed things that were said. And today I do not believe the story.

J. L. Traugher’s papers are extremely important in showing how unlikely it is that Mark Hofmann could have found the large collection of McLellin material he spoke of in the hands of one person in Texas. In one of the documents, Mr. Traugher indicated that the McLellin collection was scattered and some of it was even burned by his wife:

After the death of Dr. McLellan, his widow broke up housekeeping and left Independence, Mo., where they had been living from 1869 to 1883. As she had no particular use for them, she burnt a great many of the Doctor’s papers, and gave away others to persons who asked for them.

I believe that Mr. Hofmann undoubtedly made up the idea of a large and important McLellin collection after reading some of McLellin’s letters located in the RLDS Church Archives. On August 23, 1984, Hofmann told Sandra that he was aware of papers concerning McLellin which were possessed by that church. In McLellin’s letters he speaks of some items he had in his possession. In the July 1872 letter, for instance, McLellin stated:

Now all L.D.Sism claims that Joseph Smith translated the Book [of Mormon] with Urim and Thummim, when he did not even have or retain the Nephite or Jaredite interpreters but translated the entire Book of M. by means of a small stone. I have certificates to that effect from E. A. Cowdery (Oliver’s widow), Martin Harris, and Emma [Smith] Bidamon. And I have the testimony of John and David Whitmer.

From information obtained from Mark Hofmann, Brent Metcalfe helped an LDS Institute teacher compile a list of the material found in the McLellin collection. This list mentions the identical items contained in the McLellin letter: “d. Affidavits he collected about translation of Book of Mormon process: Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery, John Whitmer, David Whitmer, Martin Harris, and Emma Smith.”

The evidence provided by the papers in Mr. Traugher's possession seems to show that although Mr. Hofmann knew from McLellin's 1872 letter that he had these statements about the translation of the Book of Mormon, he never actually obtained them. Brent Metcalfe said on KUED that it was his understanding that some of the affidavits dated back to 1831 and that the one by Emma Smith cast doubt on Joseph Smith's story of his first vision. Another report given by a local television station claimed that Steven Christensen wrote in his diary that the Emma Smith affidavit was very damaging to the Mormon church. The Traugher papers seem to demonstrate that Hofmann did not know what the Emma Smith statement contained and that he was probably trying to raise the price of the collection by claiming that there was embarrassing information found in it. If Mr. Hofmann really had a document with Emma Smith's name on it which was exceptionally damaging to the church, I would be inclined to believe that it was a forgery created within the last few years. In any case, Dawn Tracy reported that J. L. Traugher was shown the Emma Smith affidavit by William E. McLellin and copied it "for a book." The entry originally written by Emma Smith reads:

The first that my husband translated was translated by the Urim and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost. After that, he used a small stone, not exactly black, but was rather of a dark color. March 29, 1870. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, December 3, 1985)

When I read Emma Smith's statement in the *Tribune*, I felt that it had a familiar ring. In discussing the matter with Michael Marquardt, he correctly identified it as being a quotation out of a letter Emma Smith wrote to Mrs. Emma Pilgrim. We had printed this statement many years ago from an article by James E. Lancaster in the *Saints' Herald*, an RLDS publication. It is found in *Mormonism—Shadow of Reality?* page 42:

Now the first that my husband translated, was translated by the use of the Urim and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris LOST, after that he USED A SMALL STONE, not exactly black, but was rather a dark color. . . .

The reader will see that the statement is essentially the same as Traugher's copy made from McLellin's collection. Michael Marquardt gives the date of the letter as March 27, 1870. Richard Van Wagoner and Steve Walker give the same date in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1982, page 67, n. 78. Dawn Tracy's article lists the date as "March 29, 1970," but it is very likely that someone has just misread a seven for a nine. William E. McLellin seems to have copied the item from Emma Smith's letter to Mrs. Pilgrim. Traugher, in turn, copied it into his manuscript and Dawn Tracy

recopied it for publication in the *Tribune*. In the letter to Mrs. Pilgrim, Joseph Smith's widow even asked about Mr. McLellin. This would indicate that Mrs. Pilgrim was in touch with McLellin. In his letter of July 1872, McLellin referred to the statements he had collected concerning the translation of the Book of Mormon as "certificates." It may be that when he copied the material from the letter, he had Mrs. Pilgrim certify that it was a correct copy. This might explain why Emma Smith's statement was later referred to as an affidavit.

While it is true that the statement that Joseph Smith used "a small stone" to translate the Book of Mormon is damaging to the Mormon position since it links Joseph Smith to magic, the fact that it had already been published in *Mormonism—Shadow of Reality?* and other publications would make it of very little value. That Steven Christensen was so worried about the "affidavit" seems to show that Mr. Hofmann had misrepresented its contents.

The statement of Oliver Cowdery's widow, which Hofmann claimed he had found, was quoted by McLellin himself in a letter written in February 1870. It has already been published by Van Wagoner and Walker in their article in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1982, page 51:

I cheerfully certify that I was familiar with the manner of Joseph Smith translating the Book of Mormon. He translated the most of it at my Father's house. And I often sat by and saw and heard them translate and write for hours together. Joseph never had a curtain drawn between him and his scribe while he was translating. He would place the director in his hat, and then place his face in his hat, so as to exclude the light.

H. O. Traugher insists that Mark Hofmann never contacted him. Nevertheless, he was summoned to appear before a grand jury investigating the bombings. Whether he can travel to Salt Lake City is in question because his wife has suffered a stroke.

Mr. Hofmann's attempt to make the contents of the McLellin collection seem very sensational must have been motivated by a desire to extort more money from those who wished to keep it hidden from public view. His claim that some of the Joseph Smith Papyri were in the McLellin collection undoubtedly stems from a rumor that some of the papyri had been found in Texas. We had reported this in the *Salt Lake City Messenger* in May 1971. We quoted from a letter which related that Dr. Hugh Nibley had told someone that "there was more papyri found and that it was discovered in Texas. . . . Mention was made by Nibley that Facsimile No. 2 was among the papyri." At first Hofmann only claimed that he had the original of Fac. No. 2 in the Book of Abraham and some fragments of papyri. I have recently learned, however, that just before

the bombings he also asserted that he even had the original of Fac. No. 3. Earlier in this newsletter I related that the *Tribune* reported Hofmann offered to sell Wade Lillywhite “an ancient papyrus facsimile from the McLellin papers.” Mr. Hofmann wanted “\$100,000” for this document. I assumed, of course, that this was Fac. No. 2, but when I called Mr. Lillywhite, he informed me that it was really Fac. No. 3 that Hofmann offered him!

The reader will remember that Mr. Hofmann broke up the papyrus which Kenneth Rendell gave him on consignment. Randall claimed that because the piece was damaged, it would be “worth well under \$1,000.” Hofmann had told Brent Metcalfe that this fragment was part of the McLellin collection. The *Deseret News*, November 30, 1985, reported that “Ashment said, that Metcalfe had offered that papyrus fragment to a West Coast investor for about \$30,000.” The same article says:

Many in the historical community attribute to Metcalfe their belief that Hofmann had the McLellin collection and was about to sell it. A number of people told the *Deseret News* that Metcalfe had told them since January that he had seen photographs of the collection or that he knew that the contents were controversial.

Metcalfe told the *Deseret News* after the bombings that he had believed Hofmann had the collection and that it was valuable. However, he said, all his information came from Hofmann and he had never seen the collection or photographs of it himself. [*Deseret News*, November 30, 1985]

On November 28, 1985, the *Deseret News* printed this information:

Police, however, are convinced Hofmann was involved in double dealings: selling documents he never had to different buyers under the pretext each was buying a valuable collection [*sic*].

“He took one buyer with him to New York to buy the documents and even showed him shipping receipts,” the police official said. “He then told another buyer the documents were in Texas. He can’t have it both ways.”

Alvin Rust, a Salt Lake coin dealer whose son accompanied Hofmann to New York to buy the papers, said Thursday he has believed all along that Hofmann has not been honest in his business dealings. . . .

“Why was he claiming to have pieces of papyrus from the McLellin papers when he in fact bought it from someone else?” the police official asked.

## CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Since the bombings, many theories have been put forth to explain what happened. Some people feel that the murders are related to the financial problems Steven

Christensen and J. Gary Sheets had with their investment firm CFS Financial Corporation. Another theory is that a Mormon (or Mormons) committed the bombings to retaliate against those who were bringing embarrassing church documents to light. Some even feel that the church itself is involved in the murders. This idea seems to be very popular with those who are opposed to the church. While I must agree that the church was deeply involved in the financial transactions which may have led to the murders, it is rather hard to believe that the leadership of the church would be so foolish as to handle the situation in such a manner. The use of bombs, of course, brought immediate attention to everything church leaders wanted to conceal. It has brought a flood of reporters to Salt Lake City and a great deal of unfavorable publicity to the church. Anything, of course, is possible in such a bizarre case, and if we do find any evidence pointing to the church, we will certainly pursue it.

Still another theory is that the murders were committed by anti-Mormons or liberal Mormons who wanted to stop the sale of the McLellin documents and bring the whole clandestine operation to light. Under this scenario, the first bomb would have prevented the transfer of the documents because Mr. Christensen was supposed to authenticate and appraise them. Former Church Archivist Donald Schmidt was called in the second day to perform Christensen’s task, but the bomb in Hofmann’s car again prevented the transfer of the documents. This scenario would seem to require either intensive surveillance or a traitor among the friends of those involved in the transaction. No one was more concerned about security than Mark Hofmann, and it is highly unlikely that anyone could have learned when he was going to transfer the documents without inside information or electronic surveillance.

The scenario suggested by police is that Hofmann and possibly an accomplice (or accomplices) planted the bombs that killed Mr. Christensen and Mrs. Sheets. They feel that the next day Hofmann was in the process of transporting a third bomb (either to plant it or to get rid of it) when the explosion occurred. At first it was reported that the bomb exploded under the car seat, but this report proved to be false. The injuries Mr. Hofmann suffered obviously did not come from a bomb exploding beneath him. Furthermore, police claim to have a witness who saw the remains of the wrapping paper which surrounded the box in which the bomb was placed before the car burned up. It seems very unlikely that Mr. Hofmann would enter his car with a strange package setting on the seat after what had happened to the two bombing victims the day before. This is especially true in Hofmann’s case because he claimed his life had been threatened. Now it may be

possible that a package could have been placed on the seat in some way so that it could not easily be seen by Mr. Hofmann. The police, however, claim that they have testimony that Hofmann was carrying a package, and they feel that he was placing it on the seat when it exploded. At this time I do not know how good the evidence is that Hofmann brought the package into the car, but if this can be established, it would almost certainly show that he was guilty of the bombings. It could, of course, be possible that he received the package from someone else, but if that were the case, he would know who the murderer was and could have helped the police solve the crime.

However this may be, police claim that the bombs used were pipe bombs placed in shoe-box sized containers with brown wrapping paper around them. The names of the victims were written on the packages with a felt marking pen. The *Deseret News*, December 1, 1985, reported: "Police have maintained that Hofmann was injured by a bomb of his own making, and they claim their evidence is substantial. Following the Oct. 16 blast, investigators searched Hofmann's car and recovered a number of items, including pieces of pipe, brown butcher paper, a felt marking pen and surgical gloves." Whether the pipe, wrapping paper and marking pen involved in the bombings are identical with the items found in Hofmann's car remains to be seen. In all fairness, however, I should say that there is always a possibility that someone else placed the items into the car to frame Mr. Hofmann.

One thing that is particularly troubling, however, is that police found a copy of a book telling how to make bombs in the possession of Hofmann's associate Shannon Flynn. The *Deseret News* for October 23, 1985, reveals that Hofmann was with Flynn when the book was purchased and that this occurred just days before the bombings:

About eight months ago, Flynn accompanied Hofmann to purchase a machine gun, which both converted to a fully automatic weapon. Several days before the bombings, the pair purchased "Anarchists' Cookbook," a book on how to make bombs, from the Cosmic Aeroplane.

It is true, of course, that everyone who buys the *Anarchists' Cookbook* does not actually make bombs. Brent Metcalfe, in fact, reports that he saw a copy of this book in the possession of Mormon church security when he worked there. The church has received many bomb threats and may have used the book to inform its personnel concerning the different types of bombs they might encounter. At any rate, it does seem strange that this book would be purchased just days before the bombings. On December 1, 1985, the *Deseret News* printed this information:

Hofmann's attorney, Bradley Rich, said last week that it was his understanding that Hofmann and Shannon Patrick Flynn, 27, a friend and associate, had discussed building a bomb.

Hofmann and Flynn face federal charges of possessing a machine gun, but no charges have been filed in the bombings.

Flynn's attorney, James Barber, also said his client obtained two blasting caps earlier this year, but the lawyer declined to say what Flynn did with them. Attorneys for both men said the blasting caps have nothing to do with the bombings.

To my knowledge, police have not yet established exactly what Hofmann's motive would have been for killing both Steven Christensen and J. Gary Sheets' wife. Police seem to feel, however, that Christensen may have come to the conclusion that Hofmann was trying to perpetrate a fraudulent deal with regard to the McLellin collection and that Hofmann killed him to prevent exposure. It is possible also that there could have been some tension between Christensen and Hofmann over the \$185,000 loan from First Interstate Bank that Hofmann had not paid back. It is claimed, in fact, that "Shortly before the murders Christensen waited in his car several nights in front of Hofmann's home trying to catch up with him" (*People* magazine, November 4, 1985, page 123). The *Deseret News* for December 8, 1985, reported that "Under pressure from Pinnock, Christensen had gone with Hofmann to collect a \$20,000 check which was turned over to the bank." According to the Salt Lake Tribune, Nov. 28, 1985, Shannon Flynn claimed that "at one point, Mark Hofmann and bombing victim Steven Christensen came to him [his?] home at 12:30 am. to pick up that \$20,000 check." Furthermore, Christensen asked David E. West, the attorney representing the anonymous person who was supposed to buy the McLellin collection, to "add his name to the \$185,000 check for Hofmann, . . ." (*Deseret News*, December 8, 1985). Christensen apparently wanted to be absolutely certain that Hofmann would use the check to pay his debt rather than use it for his own purposes. While Steven Christensen was undoubtedly justified in his actions, Mr. Hofmann probably felt that he was overbearing and may have resented his parental-like intrusion into his affairs. Under these circumstances it is easy to believe that there could have been friction between the two men. At this point, however, I have no evidence to show that this would have provided a sufficient motive for such a brutal murder.

While one could possibly theorize that Mark Hofmann would kill Steven Christensen so that he would be able to cash the \$185,000 check without having to get his

signature, we cannot prove that Hofmann knew that Christensen had asked for his name to be added to the check. Moreover, it is improbable that Hofmann could have obtained the check anyway unless he had some actual documents or forgeries that Donald Schmidt could have examined.

When it comes to the murder of Kathleen Sheets, I do not know of any reason why Mr. Hofmann would kill her. The package, however, was addressed to her husband, J. Gary Sheets and some have speculated that Hofmann was attempting to throw the investigation away from himself and towards the trouble Christensen and Sheets had with their investors at CFS Financial Corporation. In all fairness, however, it could be argued that a bomb was planted in Hofmann's car to draw attention away from CFS.

There is another matter that should be considered with regard to J. Gary Sheets. This is the problem concerning a book about the Salamander Letter which never materialized. Before Mark Hofmann sold the Salamander Letter to Christensen, he was very concerned about its contents and how it should be presented to the world. After Christensen bought it, he apparently decided that he wanted it back. The *Deseret News* for December 8, 1985, claimed that:

Joe Robertson, Christensen's close friend, Sheets' son-in-law and a CFS employee, told the *Deseret News* that . . . Christensen told him he was approached by Hofmann, who asked to re-purchase the Harris letter at nearly twice the \$40,000 Christensen had paid. "Steve wrestled with selling it back to Mark or giving it to the church." Christensen told another friend that he donated the letter last April after learning that the church would like to have it.

While Steven Christensen had the Salamander Letter, he and his business partner, J. Gary Sheets, planned to publish a book about it. This undoubtedly made Mr. Hofmann very happy. One of Hofmann's best friends, Brent Metcalfe, was appointed to do research for this important book. Unfortunately, however, Mr. Sheets became worried about the affect the book might have on the testimony of, Mormons who would read it. According to Linda Sillitoe, "J. Gary Sheets . . . scrapped the Harris letter project when the letter's contents became known and controversy ensued. . . . The research was discontinued, Metcalfe was removed from the payroll and was asked to return the computer and printer Christensen bought to write the book" (*Deseret News*, December 8, 1985). The fact that Sheets stopped the project must have been rather disturbing to Mr. Hofmann. In addition, one of his closest friends, Brent Metcalfe, found himself entirely removed

from a project which had meant a great deal to him. Hofmann, of course, later hired Metcalfe as a research historian. While most people were not aware that Mr. Sheets stopped the project, Mark Hofmann undoubtedly learned all about it from Brent Metcalfe. Hofmann was probably upset at both Christensen and Sheets for scrapping the Salamander book, but whether this could have played a part in the violence that followed is only a matter of speculation.

While charges still have not been filed against Mark Hofmann, police continue to maintain that he is the prime suspect. Mike Carter wrote:

Despite a polygraph test indicating Mark W. Hofmann told the truth when he said he had no involvement in the bombings that killed two people last month, officials involved in the investigation Wednesday said "all of our evidence points in that direction." . . .

"We never close our eyes to the possibility that there may be other persons involved or responsible for the killing," said Salt Lake County Sheriff Pete Hayward. "The reason we have focused our investigation on Mr. Hofmann was because that was where the developments of the case have led us."

Salt Lake Police Chief Bud Willoughby agrees. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, November 21, 1985)

While it seems very hard for me to believe that a quiet and mannerly man like Mark Hofmann could be involved in such violent crimes, I have often heard of people who lived very peaceful lives suddenly going berserk over small matters and killing innocent people. Sometimes people keep things within them until they suddenly explode. One thing we do know about Mr. Hofmann is that he was under a great deal of pressure at the time of the murders. Alvin Rust, who loaned Hofmann \$150,000 to buy the McLellan papers, claimed that at one point Hofmann came to his shop at the point of tears and told him he was about to lose everything. Hofmann was not only double dealing with regard to the McLellan papers but was apparently doing the same on a Charles Dickens manuscript:

One group, working through Salt Lake City investment counselor Thomas Wilding, gave Mr. Hofmann \$300,000 to purchase a rare handwritten manuscript of "The Haunted Man." At least two other individuals gave \$110,000 and \$175,000 respectively for a piece of the manuscript, apparently without knowledge of the other investment deal. . . . Mr. Wilding, who said he feels his investors are victims of a fraud, said there is liable to be litigation over the Dickens book as investors attempt to regain their losses. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, November 8, 1985)



According to the *Tribune*, November 1, 1985, the notes for \$300,000 “came due Oct. 14”—the day before the homicides.

Mr. Wilding said that Mr. Hofmann was to be penalized a total of \$4,000 per day, plus interest, after that due date. . . . Mr. Hofmann also owed \$185,000 to First Interstate Bank. . . . He also owed an additional \$150,000 to Salt Lake City coin dealer Alvin Rust, . . .

Mark Hofmann was not only having a difficult time financially, but his dishonesty with regard to the McLellin collection was about to catch up with him. His entire reputation as a Mormon document dealer was at stake. Mr. Hofmann had already shown signs of irrational behavior when he broke up the Rendell papyrus for the purpose of deception. Under the mounting pressure, he could have decided to take more desperate action in an attempt to save himself from ruin.

One thing that really bothers me about the whole situation is that Mark Hofmann has refused to talk to police or to submit to a lie detector test administered by the police. His lawyers claim that he is not talking because the police have already made up their mind that he is the prime suspect. While it is certainly true that the police should have been more cautious in their statements to the press, Hofmann’s refusal to talk about the murders does not help the situation. If he is really innocent, then his silence is only tending to help the real murderer (or murderers) to remain at large and to increase the possibility that someone else will be killed. Even if he has no information about the real killer(s), an honest presentation of the facts could possibly help police redirect their investigation. Then they could focus their attention on more profitable areas. If, on the other hand, Hofmann is really guilty, then the less he says the harder it will be to convict him. His statements would only tend to incriminate him.

Although the evidence showing that Hofmann was guilty of fraudulent business dealings seems to be irrefutable, this does not necessarily mean that he is a murderer. It could be possible that he is being framed. While his silence tends to make me suspicious, I will try to keep an open mind. The Bible says that “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him” (Proverbs 18:13). If anyone has any relevant information with regard to this subject, I would appreciate hearing about it. This issue of the *Messenger* contains only a very sketchy account of the Mark Hofmann story. I am, however, working on a book on the subject.

While we are sending a free copy to everyone on our mailing list, it costs us about ten times as much postage to send an individual copy which does not go bulk rate. This, plus the size of this newsletter, has forced us to put a charge on additional copies. There is still no subscription charge on the *Messenger*, and we will continue to send out free mailings as the Lord provides. We do, however, welcome donations by those who wish to help in the ministry. All donations to UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY are tax deductible.

We are spending a great deal of time trying to get to the bottom of the Salamandergate scandal. Coming issues of this newsletter will probably have more on the bombings and the Mormon church’s attempt to suppress embarrassing documents.

## Still More Developments

After the bomb exploded in Mark Hofmann’s car, investigators learned that Hofmann had a copy of the “Oath of a Freeman.” This is supposed to be the “oldest document ever printed on an American press.” He was trying to sell it to the Library of Congress for 1.5 million dollars. It is claimed that Hofmann bought this document for only \$23 from Argosy Bookstore in New York. When I learned about this matter, I felt that this small sheet of paper, with printing only on one side, would have to be one of the greatest finds of the century or else a clever forgery. I reasoned that if a person were forging such an item, it would be easy to print more than one copy. The first copy could be sold for a very large amount of money and the other copies would go for smaller amounts at a later time. At any rate, after police began investigating Hofmann, it was reported to me that they had found three copies. Although police did not mention the broadside by name, they said they were concerned about forgery because they had found a duplication of documents. On December 21, 1993, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that Hofmann did, in fact, have more than one copy:

Shannon Patrick Flynn, however, said Friday that Mr. Hofmann claimed he found two copies of the oath, . . .

The *Tribune* Friday contacted Dickson D. “Duke” Cowley . . . who said he and another Arizona man were approached in September by Mr. Hofmann and Mr. Flynn, who represented that they were in possession of a second copy of the oath and wanted Mr. Cowley and co-investor Wilford Cardon to buy a 30 percent interest in that document for \$175,000.

The *Deseret News* for December 22, 1993, reported:

Sources in the Salt Lake County attorney’s office and the Salt Lake City Police Department confirmed that, in addition to Hofmann being their prime suspect in bombings that killed two people last October, they are considering fraud and/or forgery charges against him. Richard P. Howard, RLDS Church historian, flew Tuesday to Salt Lake City . . . bringing with him three documents for study. One was the Joseph Smith III blessing, . . .

Allen Roberts, a local architect and historian, said Howard told him Tuesday that all documents relating to Hofmann were being examined. Howard said police told him “they had found a person who could sit down and write out a Joseph Smith III blessing in Thomas Bullock’s handwriting,” according to Roberts.

When I questioned why Hofmann would not tell where he obtained the blessing document, he claimed that he had made an affidavit for the church which revealed its source. On December 22, I was informed that the affidavit gave the name as Allen Bullock of Coalville, Utah, and that no such person could be found.

# CRISIS IN LDS HISTORY

## Mormon Scholars Question Book of Mormon

Writing in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 28, 1985, Dawn Tracy claimed that “Tumultuous times may be ahead as Mormons wrestle with scholarly works challenging traditional stories about the origins of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” James L. Clayton, a Mormon scholar who teaches history at the University of Utah, made this interesting comment:

There’s confusion swirling around the LDS community on how to handle new documents, appropriate methods to study sacred history and the role of church religion teachers. . . . If you aren’t confused, you may not have the full picture of what’s going on. (*Ibid.*)

As early as 1957, Thomas O’Dea predicted that the Mormon Church was facing a crisis. In *The Mormon Establishment*, pages 153-54, Wallace Turner wrote:

Dr. Thomas F. O’Dea, a sociologist at Columbia University, who wrote a major study called *The Mormons* . . . said that “Mormonism is in a sleeping crisis. It is a strange crisis, one not easily noticed; a lotus-eating crisis, a sleeping crisis, an unrecognized crisis of prosperity and acceptance. It has met all its crises of adversity. But can it survive its own success?”

Dr. O’Dea claimed that the Church was facing “the threat of apostasy on the part of its intellectuals” (*The Mormons*, page 234). He maintained that “A final loss of the intellectual would be a wound from which the church could hardly recover. A liberalization of belief and an abandonment of traditional positions in faith would transform, if not destroy Mormonism. These potentialities slumber fitfully and insecurely within the present state of prolonged but regularized crisis” (*Ibid.*, page 240).

### LARSON FORCED OUT

That the crisis has become very severe became evident on September 28, 1985, when the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

One church scholar said he was forced to resign his job after writing a research paper. . . .



New Testament Manuscript About 200 AD

Stan Larson, a scripture-translation researcher, said he was forced to resign his job at the church’s Salt Lake City Scripture Translation Division after writing a paper challenging traditional beliefs about the Book of Mormon.

Dr. Larson, who reads Greek, Latin, Syriac and Hebrew, compared passages in the Book of Mormon—sacred scripture to Mormons—with the King James Version and earliest existing biblical manuscripts. He concluded that because translation errors in the King James Version are mirrored in the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith copied passages from the Bible rather than translate Jesus Christ’s Sermon on the Mount from ancient plates.

Linda Olson, a primary president in Mr. Larson’s ward, asked for a copy of the paper from Dr. Larson, and then handed it over to the bishop, Forrest Bitten, who passed it along to church headquarters. Mrs. Olson and Bishop Bitten said church authorities had asked them for the paper.

Dr. Larson said the director of the translation division suspended him from his job the next day. He said he was given an option of immediately resigning with one month’s pay or submitting to scrutiny from two church committees. If either committee reached a negative conclusion, he would be fired, dating back to the day he had met with supervisors. Dr. Larson said he elected to resign.

While the *Tribune* titled this article, “Scholar Who Challenges LDS Beliefs is Forced to Resign,” the Mormon Church’s newspaper, *Deseret News*, carried the following title over its article: “LDS are told they need not fear honest research on the Book of Mormon” (September 29, 1985). Although the *Deseret News* reported that Dr. Larson was forced to resign, it quoted Richard P. Lindsay, public communications managing director for the church, as saying:

The church and its membership have nothing to fear from any honest scholarship which treats the subject of the Book of Mormon, its doctrine and its historical origins, . . .

While the Mormon Church has the right to fire those who do not believe in its teachings, Church leaders have picked an exceptionally bad time to deal with the issue in this manner.

That Joseph Smith plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible in creating the Book of Mormon is evident to those who have made a careful comparison of the two books. We have cited over 200 places where the Book of Mormon used quotations from the New Testament (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 74-79). Most of these quotations were supposed to have been recorded in the Book of Mormon between 600 B.C. and 33 A.D.—i.e., before the New Testament was even written! Furthermore, we have demonstrated that the early Greek manuscripts of the Bible do not support Joseph Smith’s Inspired Translation of the Bible (*Ibid.*, pages 384-393). For example, in the King James Version, John 1:1 was translated as follows: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” In Joseph Smith’s Inspired Version, this unusual rendition of John 1:1 appears: “In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God.” Joseph Smith’s translation is not supported by the ancient Greek manuscripts. In fact, in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 384, we have made our own translation of John 1:1 as it appears in Papyrus Bodmer II, dated about 200 A.D. Our translation confirms the King James Version: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Mormon leaders claim that the Catholic Church altered the Bible and that Joseph Smith was restoring the true text. Since the Bodmer Papyrus predates the time when the Catholic Church came to power, it casts considerable doubt on Joseph Smith’s rendition. Robert J. Matthews, who is considered the Mormon Church’s top authority on the Inspired Revision of the Bible, made this revealing statement:

In the main the passages revised by Joseph Smith are not supported by the three great parchment manuscripts that now enjoy popularity, nor by the thousands of papyrus manuscripts and fragments, nor by the Dead Sea Scrolls. (“Joseph Smith’s Revision of the Bible,” by Robert J. Matthews, 1968, typed copy, page 17)

Stan Larson used a different approach to test the Book of Mormon, but he arrived at the same conclusion as we did—i.e., Joseph Smith was not translating ancient records. Dr. Larson examined the text of a sermon Jesus was supposed to have given to the ancient Nephites which is recorded in the Book of Mormon. It is almost identical to the Sermon on the Mount as published in the King James Version of the Bible. Larson desired to find out if the sermon in the Book of Mormon was an actual translation from the “gold plates” or whether it was merely plagiarized from the King James Version. He knew that the text of the King James Version was based on later manuscripts, and that after it was published much older manuscripts were found. These manuscripts demonstrate that some errors had crept into the Greek text and were preserved in the King James Version. He reasoned, therefore, that if the earlier and better manuscripts supported readings in Joseph Smith’s translation, it would tend to show that Smith was working from an ancient record. If, on the other hand, the errors were perpetuated in Joseph Smith’s “translation,” it would prove that Smith merely lifted his material from the King James Version. If the material was plagiarized from the King James Version, the Book of Mormon could not possibly be “Another Testament of Jesus Christ,” as the Mormon Church maintains.

Dr. Larson found twelve places in the Sermon on the Mount where the top Greek scholars agree that the King James Version is in error because of its dependence on later manuscripts. When Larson compared the Book of Mormon, he found that in every case Joseph Smith blindly copied the errors of the King James Version. The following statements are taken from Dr. Larson’s study:

The text of this BOM [Book of Mormon] sermon provides an ideal opportunity to ascertain its accuracy as a real translation, for Hugh Nibley has suggested that one must test the BOM “against its purported background” in antiquity. If at each of these twelve points the BOM has a variant version differing from both forms of the extant Greek—from both the earliest ascertainable Greek text and the later, derivative Greek text—then one would be unable to pronounce judgment on the BOM version. This is so because the differing text in the BOM could be the way the sermon was delivered in the New World. However, if the BOM text always sides with the secondary Greek text which is demonstrably a later development in the Greek, then this dependence would be strong evidence against the historicity of the

BOM. . . . Lastly, if the BOM text supports the better and demonstrably more ancient MSS which have become available in the last 470 years, it would be striking confirmation of the BOM's historicity. That is to say, if the BOM text departs from the KJV to agree with the original text, it would indeed be independent verification of the BOM as a genuine document from antiquity. . . . the question at hand is the historicity of the BOM account, . . . It is this writer's conclusion, arrived at after diligent study of the documents that have been utilized in the analysis of the twelve selected examples, that the historicity of the BOM text of the Sermon on the Mount has not been verified by modern MS discovery. The BOM text does not agree with the earliest Greek text at these twelve points, but does agree with the TR [Textus Receptus] and the KJV. ("The Sermon on the Mount: What Its Textual Transformation Discloses concerning the Historicity of the Book of Mormon," unpublished manuscript by Stan Larson, pages 24-26)

At the front of this article the reader will find a photograph of a papyrus fragment containing a portion of the Sermon on the Mount. Bruce Manning Metzger lists it as Papyrus 67 (*The Text of the New Testament*, page 254). Larson, however, feels that it should be identified as Papyrus 64 because it is actually part of the same manuscript. In any case, both scholars agree that it was written about 200 A.D. This papyrus fragment contains the text of Matthew 5:27. In the King James Version this verse reads as follows: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:"

Adam Clarke, who lived in Joseph Smith's time, pointed out that the words translated as "by them of old time" were "omitted by nearly a hundred MSS., and some of them of the greatest antiquity and authority; also by the Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Gothic, and Slavonian versions; by four copies of the old Itala; and by Origen, Cyril, Theophylact, Euthymius, and Hilary. On this authority Wetstetein and Griesbach have left it out of the text." (*Clarke's Commentary*, vol. 5, page 73)

The papyrus fragment spoken of above was found during the present century and confirms Clarke's suspicion that the five words (translated from two Greek words) were an interpolation to the text. Below is our transcription and translation of the words which appear on the papyrus fragment beginning in the middle of the ninth line and extending to the middle of the tenth line.

ΕΡΡΕΘΗ Ο[Υ ΜΟ]ΧΕΥΕΙΣ  
IT WAS SAID <sup>3</sup>NOT <sup>4</sup>THOU <sup>5</sup>SHALT <sup>6</sup>COMMIT <sup>7</sup>ADULTERY

The following shows how the text would have to read on the papyrus fragment to support the translation which appears in the King James Version. The interpolation has been circled.

ΕΡΡΕΘΗ (ΤΟΙΣ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΙΣ) ΟΥ  
ΜΟΙΧΕΥΕΙΣ

When Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, he blindly copied the interpolation "by them of old time" into his book (see 3 Nephi 12:27). Stan Larson feels that the Greek words should actually be rendered "to them of old time" instead of "by them of old time." He, therefore, accuses Joseph Smith of not only plagiarizing an interpolation but also of using the King James "mistranslation" of these words (see page 26). Larson's translation appears to be more reasonable.

At any rate, Stan Larson says that the text of the Book of Mormon shows evidence of having been derived from the King James Version after "the italic typeface" was standardized in the 1769 printing. He maintains that "All of these considerations force one to place the origin of the BOM account of the Sermon on the Mount on the historical time-line somewhere after 1769 and before 1830 when the BOM was published. This analysis based on textual criticism independently confirms Krister Stendahl's discussion from the perspective of redaction criticism and genre criticism that the BOM text of the Sermon on the Mount is not a genuine translation from an ancient language, but rather is Joseph Smith's nineteenth century targumic expansion of the English KJV text" (pages 30-31).

In footnote 34, Stan Larson shows that Joseph Smith's Inspired Version of the Bible also failed the test when it was compared with the Greek manuscripts:

Likewise, Joseph Smith's revision of the KJV, which is known as the Joseph Smith Translation (hereinafter JST) has not been substantiated by modern MS discovery. . . . In each of these twelve secure examples from the Sermon on the Mount the JST fails to agree with the original text . . . In one instance the JST revises the text of the KJV and the BOM in a direction further away from the original text, . . . (page 40)

In 1978 *Brigham Young University Studies* published an article by Stan Larson. In his recent paper Dr. Larson claims that this article "was censored by Charles Tate, the editor of *BYU Studies*, who expunged the following statements . . ." Larson proceeded to restore the material which was censored in *BYU Studies* and then stated:

These points evidently demonstrated too clearly for the editor of *BYU Studies* that Joseph Smith plagiarized from the KJV when dictating the Biblical quotations in the BOM. (page 41)

Dr. Larson is considered to be one of the top scholars in the Mormon Church. Besides his work in languages, he has become known for his research with regard to the text of the original manuscripts of the Book of Mormon. The church has published articles by him in the official publication, *The Ensign* (see the issues for September 1976 and September 1977). The September 1977 issue, page 91, referred to him as “coordinator of the standard works translation in the Church Translation Services.”

Stan Larson’s study on the text of the Sermon on the Mount and its relationship to the Book of Mormon is a very scholarly piece of work. Church leaders have apparently realized that the paper is irrefutable. Instead of dealing with the issues, they have decided to get rid of the man.

The *Los Angeles Times*, October 5, 1985, quoted Dr. Larson as saying:

“I went into New Testament textual studies hoping that when I compared Greek and Syriac manuscripts with the Book of Mormon that I would find support for the Book of Mormon and be able to show its antiquity,” Larson said. “I hoped to find support for the church, but I haven’t, to be honest.”

## ATTACK ON M.H.A.

The Mormon History Association was organized in 1965. Its membership has included some of the top historians in the Church. In May 1985 we went back to Kansas City, Missouri to attend the annual meetings of this organization. We were astonished to hear some of the church’s top scholars frankly admit Joseph Smith’s involvement in magic and money-digging. Mormon historians, who had fought these charges for many years, seemed to just cave in under the weight of the evidence.

The Mormon Church had originally given a great deal of support to the Mormon History Association, but now it seems to be backing away from the organization. Dawn Tracy reported:

At BYU, officials are reacting to other reevaluations of church history by “leaning away” from the Mormon History Association, an independent professional organization, and creating a program of their own. . . .

Keith Perkins, chairman of the BYU Department of Church History and Doctrine, said officials have established their own symposiums because MHA wasn’t allowing orthodox views to be presented. He said the

BYU symposiums “more meet our needs.” Employees may attend MHA meetings but BYU no longer pays travel costs.

“Like me, many people are upset. When I see things I hold sacred attacked, I’m offended,” he said

Robert J. Matthews, director of the BYU Department of Religious Education, said he has issued a “suggestion, and invitation” to employees to support the BYU program.

“We’re not giving orders,” he said.

“Our invitation didn’t mention MHA but people were obviously aware we are leaning away from the organization.”

Former MHA president Davis Bitton, professor of history, U. of U., called the decision “Isolating and narrow.” He said that for 20 years MHA has not tried to do public relations for the church but also has not participated in anti-Mormonism.

Drs. Matthews and Perkins said they didn’t pressure associate professor Susan Easton to withdraw a paper from MHA’s May symposium to be held in Salt Lake City. When asked why she withdrew the paper, Dr. Easton said “no comment.” . . .

Two employees in the Church Education System, who asked not to be identified, said supervisors have questioned them about papers they’ve published. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, September 28, 1985)

On June 29, 1985, John Dart reported the following in the *Los Angeles Times*:

Two women who wrote a biography of Mormon founder Joseph Smith’s first wife say they have been barred from speaking about their research at church meetings although the book has won two Mormon prizes for history.

Linda K. Newell, who wrote “Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith” with Valeen T. Avery, said church authorities “decided to remove the possibility that anyone might interpret our occasional speaking at (Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints) meetings as (amounting to) church endorsement of the book.” . . .

Newell, of Salt Lake City, said that she learned indirectly of the ban from friends and could only find the reasons when she met, at her request, with two members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the church’s top managerial body.

She said the two officials did not dispute the contents of the book, but they said that it conflicted with traditional interpretations of Joseph Smith—“particularly in regard to the initiation of polygamy in the early LDS church and therefore challenged the faith of some Latter Day Saints.”

Avery, a historian with Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, said in a separate interview that their book says that Smith was “dishonest with Emma, taking his friends’ daughters or wives as his wives. Joseph comes across in the book as a human being with flaws in his character.” . . .

“Mormon Enigma,” in its fourth printing since publication last fall by Doubleday, was cited as the best book of 1984 by the Mormon History Assn. and was co-winner of the David W. and Beatrice Evans Award for excellence in Mormon and Western biography. The latter award presentation was made at church-owned Brigham Young University . . .

Mormon historian Thomas G. Alexander, director of the Charles Redd Center at BYU, said he found the speaking ban “very disturbing.”

We have read *Mormon Enigma* and consider it to be a very good book. It is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry for \$19.95 (mail orders add 10% for postage and handling).

### NOVEL OR HISTORY?

While we felt that Mormon scholars had yielded a great deal of ground at the meetings of the Mormon History Association in May, by the time the Sunstone Theological Symposium arrived in August, they had retreated even further. (This symposium, which attracts hundreds of Mormon scholars, is not officially connected with the church.) The burning question at the symposium seemed to be whether Joseph Smith really had “gold plates” from which he translated the Book of Mormon and whether the Book of Mormon should be considered as real history. When the question was raised at the first session, C. Jess Groesbeck jokingly responded: “David, I wish you hadn’t asked that question. . . .” In his reply, Levi Peterson pointed out that “There were remarks by those who observed him [Joseph Smith] that he could translate without the plates anywhere around, and we understand now that he translated by peering into the stone in the hat—using the hat to exclude light, so that he could see what was in the stone . . .” Professor Peterson went on to point out that if Joseph Smith didn’t really need the plates to translate, what “difference does it make if they were real or not?” Although many members of the audience seemed to be amused by this statement, it did not really answer the question. Obviously, it does make a great deal of difference whether the plates “were real or not.” Since Joseph Smith claimed that he received the “gold plates” from an angel, and since the Book of Mormon goes into great detail telling how the plates were prepared so they could be translated in the last days, it logically follows that a person cannot question the existence of the

plates without making Joseph Smith a deceiver and the Book of Mormon a figment of his imagination. There is really no middle ground here.

At another session Marvin Hill, a professor of history at church-owned Brigham Young University, asserted that the Book of Mormon does not have to be history to be true:

. . . everybody’s questioning whether the plates existed and whether the Book of Mormon is history and so on. The stopping place for all of that is if you believe that Joseph is a prophet and if what he had to say is inspired. The *Doctrine and Covenants* doesn’t have to be history to be true, and my feeling is that the Book of Mormon may not have to be history to be true.

We do not see how Mormon historians can accept the Book of Mormon as true and yet claim that it doesn’t have to be historical. Apparently, what they are trying to tell us is that it is a good religious novel which contains inspiring thoughts, even though it was not written in ancient times as Joseph Smith affirmed. Some of the Mormon scholars who subscribe to the idea that the Book of Mormon is only a religious novel even refer to it as “scripture.” Their definition of scripture, however, is very different from that of a true believer. They are not saying that it is the “word of the Lord,” but only that it is accepted by the people as scripture. It is scripture in the same sense as the Koran or the Rig-Veda. If these historians are asked if Joseph Smith really had the plates, they may reply in the affirmative. They do not, however, believe that the plates date back to the time of the ancient Nephites but that they were created in the 19th century to convince the Book of Mormon witnesses that Joseph Smith really had an ancient record.

Lyn Jacobs, the man who was supposed to have discovered the Salamander letter, also spoke at one of the sessions of the Sunstone Symposium. Even though he indicated that he did not believe the Book of Mormon as history, he said that the church must continue to hold to its historicity:

If we don’t accept it [the Book of Mormon] as historical any longer, . . . then I think what we are doing, then, is . . . questioning the whole validity of the church itself—of Joseph Smith’s stance in it and . . . the stance of the living prophet today, etc. . . . if one still accepts what I do, that it really needs to within the church remain as a historical document—not that I believe that it is one, but nevertheless I think that the church has to remain believing that. It has to continue to believe it’s actual history . . .

## ROBERTS' DOUBTS

The fact that some of Mormonism's top scholars have lost faith in the Book of Mormon as history certainly presents a serious problem to church leaders. The problem is compounded by the fact that newspapers and publishers have become interested in the subject. Just recently the University of Illinois Press released a book entitled, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*. This book contains the secret studies that the noted Mormon historian B. H. Roberts made with regard to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. We had already printed these manuscripts in 1980 under the title, *B. H. Roberts' Manuscripts Revealed* (see *Salt Lake City Messenger*, July 1980, pages 11-12). Our publication, however, was of xerox copies of the manuscripts. The new printing by the University of Illinois Press has been nicely typeset with an introduction and footnotes by Brigham A. Madsen. It will undoubtedly have a much wider distribution than our publication.

B. H. Roberts, one of the greatest scholars that the Mormon church has ever produced, is noted for his defense of Mormonism and the Book of Mormon. In his *New Witness for God* he took a very firm stand on the Book of Mormon's authenticity:

. . . if the book itself could be proved to be other than it claims to be, . . . then the Church . . . and its message and doctrines, which in some respects, may be said to have arisen out of the Book of Mormon, must fall; for if that book is other than it claims to be; if its origin is other than that ascribed to it by Joseph Smith, then Joseph Smith says that which is untrue; he is a false prophet of false prophets; and all he taught and all his claims to inspiration and divine authority, are not only vain but wicked; and all that he did as a religious teacher is not only senseless, but mischievous beyond human comprehending. (*New Witness for God*, vol. 2, Preface, as cited in *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, page 12)

As time passed, B. H. Roberts realized that there were some very serious problems with regard to the Book of Mormon which he was not able to answer. In his secret manuscripts he made these revealing comments:

. . . was Joseph Smith possessed of a sufficiently vivid and creative imagination as to produce such a work as the Book of Mormon from such materials as have been indicated in the preceding chapters . . . That such power of imagination would have to be of a high order is conceded; that Joseph Smith possessed such a gift of mind there can be no question. (*Studies of the Book of Mormon*, page 243)

In the light of this evidence, there can be no doubt as to the possession of a vividly strong, creative imagination by Joseph Smith, the Prophet, an imagination, it could with reason be urged, which, given the suggestions that are to be found in the "common knowledge" of accepted American antiquities of the times, supplemented by such a work as Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews*, would make it possible for him to create a book such as the Book of Mormon is. (*Ibid.*, page 250)

If from all that has gone before in Part I, the view be taken the Book of Mormon is merely of human origin; that a person of Joseph Smith's limitations in experience and in education, who was of the vicinage and of the period that produced the book—if it be assumed that he is the author of it, then it could be said there is much internal evidence in the book itself to sustain such a view.

In the first place there is a certain lack of perspective in the things the book relates as history that points quite clearly to an undeveloped mind as their origin. The narrative proceeds in characteristic disregard of conditions necessary to its reasonableness, as if it were a tale told by a child, with utter disregard for consistency. (*Ibid.*, page 250)

There were other Anti-Christ's among the Nephites, but they were more military leaders than religious innovators, yet much of the same kidney in spirit with these dissenters here passed in review; but I shall hold that what is here presented illustrates sufficiently the matter taken in hand by referring to them, namely that they are all of one breed and brand; so nearly alike that one mind is the author of them, and that a young and undeveloped, but piously inclined mind. The evidence I sorrowfully submit, points to Joseph Smith as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are the product of history, that they come upon the scene separated by long periods of time, and among a race which was the ancestral race of the red man of America. (*Ibid.*, page 271)

In an article published in *The Ensign*, December 1983, pages 11-19, Professor Truman G. Madsen, of Brigham Young University, tried to minimize the importance of B. H. Roberts' parallels between *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon:

Are there "striking parallels" between the Book of Mormon and Ethan Smith's 1823 novel, *View of the Hebrews*, a fictional account of Israelites from the lost Ten Tribes who migrated to the Americas after the destruction of Jerusalem? Elder Roberts confirmed for

his missionaries that any such parallels are abstract, even empty. Aside from the claim of Hebraic backgrounds, only two specific similarities occur: Ethan Smith quotes Isaiah at length and refers to the Urim and Thummim. . . .

Ethan Smith published a book on revelation in 1833, . . . He also republished *View of the Hebrews*, revised and enlarged, in 1835. Both books were published long after the Book of Mormon began circulation. If critics can claim that Joseph Smith was aware of Ethan Smith's novel, it surely can also be claimed that Ethan Smith was aware of Joseph Smith's.

Professor Truman Madsen (not to be confused with Brigham Madsen) made two very glaring errors in his article. The errors are so serious, in fact, that they would lead one to believe that he has never read *View of the Hebrews*.

1. He referred twice to Ethan Smith's book as a "novel." Anyone who has read the book knows that it is not a novel. In the Bibliography to *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, page 347, we read:

"Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* was, of course, not a 'novel' in any sense of the word, but was a serious analysis of current archeological discoveries and the known cultural studies of Indian tribes in order to prove the theory that the American Indians were of Israelitish descent."

2. Truman Madsen also maintained that Ethan Smith "republished *View of the Hebrews*, revised and enlarged, in 1835 . . . long after the Book of Mormon began circulation." Dr. Madsen is ten years off on his dating. The correct date appears on the title page as "1825." This is substantiated in the preface "For The Second Edition" which ends, "Poultney, April 1, 1825." Instead of the "enlarged" edition being published five years after the Book of Mormon (as Madsen maintains), it actually was in print five years before the Book of Mormon. We have photographically reprinted B. H. Roberts' own copy of *View of the Hebrews*. This book, which contains some of Roberts' handwritten notations, is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry.

In another article, Professor Madsen claimed that B. H. Roberts was only using "the 'Devil's Advocate' approach to stimulate thought" when he wrote his controversial studies of the Book of Mormon. A careful examination of these manuscripts, however, leads one to believe that Roberts was struggling with grave doubts about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The recent publication of B. H. Roberts' secret manuscripts includes some new and important evidence concerning his frame of mind after he completed his studies. It comes from

the "Personal Journal of Wesley P. Lloyd, former dean of the Graduate School at Brigham Young University and a missionary under Roberts in the Eastern States Mission." Lloyd recorded this revealing information in his journal on August 7, 1933—less than two months before Roberts' death:

Roberts went to work and investigated it [the Book of Mormon] from every angle but could not answer it satisfactorily to him self. At his request Pres. Grant called a meeting of the Twelve Apostles and Bro. Roberts presented the matter, told them frankly that he was stumped and ask for their aide [*sic*] in the explanation. In answer, they merely one by one stood up and bore testimony to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. George Albert Smith in tears testified that his faith in the Book had not been shaken by the question. Pres. Ivins, the man most likely to be able to answer a question on that subject was unable to produce the solution. No answer was available. Bro. Roberts could not criticize them for not being able to answer it or to assist him, but said that in a Church which claimed continuous revelation, a crisis had arisen where revelation was necessary. After the meeting he wrote Pres. Grant expressing his disappointment at the failure and especially at the failure of Pres. Ivins to contribute to the problem. It was mentioned at the meeting by Bro. Roberts that there were other Book of Mormon problems that needed special attention. Richard R. Lyman spoke up and asked if they were things that would help our prestige and when Bro. Roberts answered no, he said then why discuss them. This attitude was too much for the historically minded Roberts. There was however a committee appointed to study this problem, consisting of Bros. Talmage, Ballard, Roberts and one other Apostle. They met and looked vacantly at one and other, but none seemed to know what to do about it. Finally, Bro. Roberts mentioned that he had at least attempted an answer and he had it in his drawer. That it was an answer that would satisfy people that didn't think, but a very inadequate answer to a thinking man. . . . After this Bro. Roberts made a special Book of Mormon study. Treated the problems systematically and historically and in a 400 type written page thesis set forth a revolutionary article on the origin of the Book of Mormon and sent it to Pres. Grant. It's an article far too strong for the average Church member but for the intellectual group he considers it a contribution to assist in explaining Mormonism. He swings to a psychological explanation of the Book of Mormon and shows that the plates were not objective but subjective with Joseph Smith, that his exceptional imagination qualified him psychologically for the experience which he had in presenting to the world the Book of Mormon and that the plates with the Urim and Thummim were not objective. He explained certain literary difficulties



in the Book. . . . These are some of the things which has made Bro. Roberts shift his base on the Book of Mormon. Instead of regarding it as the strongest evidence we have of Church Divinity, he regards it as one which needs the most bolstering. His greatest claim for the divinity of the Prophet Joseph lies in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. (“Journal of Wesley P. Lloyd,” August 7, 1933, as cited in *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, pages 23-24)

Utah Lighthouse Ministry is selling B. H. Roberts’ *Studies of the Book of Mormon* (paperback edition published by Signature Books). We are also handling another book concerning the relationship of *View of the Hebrews* to the Book of Mormon. This is David Persuitté’s in depth study of parallels between the two books. It is published under the title, *Joseph Smith and the Origin of the Book of Mormon*.

### OVERREACTION?

The Mormon leaders seem to realize that they are facing serious historical problems. In an article entitled, “Keep the Faith,” Gordon B. Hinckley, of the church’s First Presidency, wrote:

We live at a time when old beliefs and old standards are being challenged. The Church of which we are members is being attacked on many sides. A few dissidents, apostates, and excommunicants have marshaled their resources in an effort to belittle and demean this work—its history, its doctrine, its practices.

There is another group presently receiving wide publicity across the nation. They are poking into all the crevices of our history, ferreting out little things of small import and magnifying them into great issues of public discussion, working the media in an effort to give credibility to their efforts. . . . I plead with you, do not let yourselves be numbered among the critics, among the dissidents, among the apostates. . . .

To all Latter-day Saints, I say, keep the faith. (*The Ensign*, September 1985, pages 4-6)

Just two months before Hofmann and Flynn came to his office to inquire what they should tell police who were investigating the bombings, the Mormon Apostle Dallin Oaks made an attack on the news media and also warned members not to criticize church leaders even if they are wrong:

My fellow teachers: in the six months since I accepted this invitation, there has been a flurry of excitement about Church history. . . . the news media are having a field day. Controversy makes good copy, especially when it concerns a church with some

doctrines that diverge sharply from those of mainstream Christianity. . . .

The resulting publicity has stimulated attacks on the Church by seemingly religious persons. . . . I have chosen to speak on how Church history should be read, especially the so-called “history” that comes in bits and pieces in the daily or weekly news media. . . . the news media are particularly susceptible to conveying erroneous information about facts, including historical developments that are based on what I have called scientific uncertainties. . . .

Bias can also be exercised in decisions on what news stories to publish and what to omit. . . .

Criticism is particularly objectionable when it is directed toward Church authorities, general or local. . . . Evil-speaking of the Lord’s anointed is in a class by itself. It is one thing to depreciate a person who exercises corporate power or even government power. It is quite another thing to criticize or depreciate a person for the performance of an office to which he or she has been called of God. It does not matter that the criticism is true. . . .

The Holy Ghost will not guide or confirm criticism of the Lord’s anointed, or of Church leaders, local or general. . . .

Our individual, personal testimonies are based on the witness of the Spirit, not on any combination or accumulation of historical facts. If we are so grounded, no alteration of historical facts can shake our testimonies. (“Reading Church History,” 1985 CES *Doctrine and Covenants* Symposium, BYU, August 16, 1985, pages 1, 2, 5, 16, 24-26)

The Mormon scholar L. Jackson Newell has publicly criticized the response by church leaders to the problems:

L. Jackson Newell, dean of liberal education at the University of Utah and co-editor of “Dialogue,” said the increasing cries coming from leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints urging members to be obedient to authority and the escalating action leaders are taking against LDS scholars attack the principles of free inquiry and free expression.

“My concern is that their response . . . itself looms as a grave threat to our traditions, values and doctrines. . . .” We are witnessing systematic efforts to undermine confidence in virtually all unofficial sources of understanding about our past. (*Deseret News*, August 25, 1985)

### MAGIC NAMES?

When Fawn Brodie published her book, *No Man Knows My History*, in 1945, the Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley ridiculed her for accepting “the stories of the

same witnesses regarding ‘seer stones, ghosts, magic incantations, and nocturnal excavations.’ Now scandal stories thrive notoriously well in rural settings, while the judgment of one’s neighbors regarding one’s general character over a number of years is far less likely to run into the fantastic. Yet Brodie can reject the character witnesses as prejudiced while accepting the weirdest extravagances of their local gossip” (*No Ma’am That’s Not History*, pages 11-12).

Today, Mormon scholars find themselves using the same sources which were once ridiculed. At the Sunstone Symposium, Levi Peterson pointed this out:

Ironically, Bushman has found it valid, as Professor Walker has found it, to use the same data which anti-Mormon historian Fawn Brodie employed in *No Man Knows My History*. And so it’s interesting that her book, which has been vilified for decades, basically is based upon the—utilizes the same sources that now faithful historians will be using, and are using.

We certainly feel that these sources are important and have used them in our publications *Joseph Smith and Money-Digging* and *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*. We feel, however, that scholars will have to be cautious about seeing magic practices in things that could be more easily explained in other ways. The Mormon scholar D. Michael Quinn, for instance, has probably gone too far in this respect. *The Deseret News*, August 24, 1985, reported:

One Mormon historian says evidence is convincing that Mormon Church founder Joseph Smith and his family were involved in various forms of ritual and folk magic, but that evidence does not diminish his own faith in his religion.

D. Michael Quinn, a Brigham Young University history professor, Friday addressed a session of the Sunstone Theological Symposium, . . .

He said it’s clear that the family of Joseph Smith Sr., including his son, the Mormon prophet, Joseph Smith Jr., believed in and practiced ritual and folk magic. . . .

Smith Sr. gave his sons Joseph, Hyrum and Alvin names with magical significance.

While we do agree that the evidence clearly shows that the Smith family was involved in magic, the claim that Joseph Smith, Sr., gave his children magic names seems to be based on speculation. According to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 25, 1985, Dr. Quinn “cited the biblical Joseph’s use of silver cups for divination.” Quinn believes that Joseph Smith’s father felt that the biblical Joseph was involved in divination, and therefore he named his son after him. This idea comes from the 44th chapter of Genesis. Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt taught that God “sanctified” a “silver” cup and that Joseph actually used it for divination:

The “silver cup” which Joseph in Egypt commanded the steward to put in Benjamin’s sack, in order to try his brethren, was, most probably, sanctified as a Urim and Thummim to Joseph. Hence, Joseph commanded the steward to pursue his brethren, and say to them, “Is not this in which my Lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth?” And when Joseph’s brethren were brought back, he said unto them, “What deed is this that ye have done? Wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?” (*Masterful Discourses and Writings of Orson Pratt*, compiled by N. B. Lundwall, page 589)

Adam Clarke, a noted Protestant writer, had an entirely different view of the incident. He said it was “not at all likely that Joseph practiced any kind of divination. . . .” (*Clarke’s Commentary*, vol. 1, page 247). Clarke pointed out that since Joseph was trying to “deceive his brethren for a short time” (his brothers, of course, had previously sold him into slavery), he might pretend to have a cup he used for divining to help convince them that he was a harsh and idolatrous Egyptian governor. In Genesis 42: 7, 9 and 23, we read:

And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; . . . and said unto them, Ye are spies; . . . And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.

According to Clarke’s view, the statements about divination should not be given any more credence than Joseph’s charge that his brothers were “spies” and had stolen his cup. This interpretation seems to be compatible with the context of Genesis, and although Joseph interprets a number of dreams, there is no mention of a divining cup being used.

In any case, it may be possible that Joseph Smith, Sr. regarded the biblical Joseph as a diviner. The important question, however, is did he name his own son after him for this reason? While there is no way to know for certain, it would seem that the most likely explanation is that Joseph Smith, Sr., liked his own name and decided to bestow it on his son. As to the origin of the name Hyrum, Dr. Quinn felt that it came from Hiram Abif who plays an important role in Masonry. Masonic writers claim that Hiram Abif was the “Hiram” mentioned in I Kings 7:13-14. He was “a worker in brass.” Another explanation, however, might be that Hyrum Smith’s name came from “Hiram king of Tyre.” This king was David’s friend and cooperated with Solomon when he built the temple (see I Kings 5:1-18). Joseph Smith, Sr., gave one of his other sons the biblical name Samuel. Dr. Quinn has found a magic name which he feels is similar to Alvin. The Bible, however, contains a close parallel in “Alvan” (Genesis 36:23).

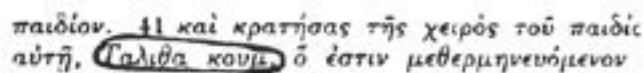
Wesley P. Walters, who has recently done some research in the census records, has informed us that the names Joseph Smith, Sr., gave to his sons are typical of those found in the vicinity of Palmyra. Mormon scholar Richard Anderson pointed out that there “were other Joseph Smiths in the Manchester area, and . . . one ‘Hiram’ Smith signed Hurlbut’s general Manchester affidavit, . . .” (*BYU Studies*, Spring 1970, page 292). Under the circumstances, we feel that the claim that Joseph Smith’s father used magic names for his children is not very convincing.

## JESUS A MAGICIAN?

In 1978 Dr. Morton Smith charged that Jesus had used a “magical formula” at the time of the “raising of Jairus’ daughter” (*Jesus The Magician*, page 95). In his attempt to excuse Joseph Smith for the role he played in the magic arts, Dr. Quinn tries to link Jesus to the occult. On August 25, 1985, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

Professor Quinn stated that the teachings of the occult have long been present to religion and have not been completely rejected by it. . . . He sees in Jesus’ words to the daughter of Jairus in the Gospel of Mark, “Talltha, cumi,” a magical formula.

To those who are looking for magical formulas, the words *talitha cumi* (or *talitha koum* in some versions of the Greek text) may seem to have a mysterious sound. Below is a photograph of the Greek text of Mark 5:41 from *The Greek New Testament*. The two important words have been circled.



παῖδιον. 41 καὶ κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ παιδὸς αὐτῆς, Ταλιθα κουμι, ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνευόμενον

To understand the problem here a person must realize that while the Gospels were written in Greek, Aramaic was the language Jesus and his disciples used most frequently. While Mark 5:41 is written entirely in Greek characters, the words *talitha cumi* are not Greek words. They are actually Aramaic words transliterated into Greek characters. The words mean, “Little girl, arise” (*Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, page 999; also *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*). The words *talitha cumi* are certainly not secret magic words for Mark himself tells us that they are “translated” as “Little girl, I say to you, arise” (Mark 5:41). Luke relates the same story but does not use the Aramaic words *talitha cumi*. He merely says that Jesus took hold of the girl’s hand and said, “Little girl, arise” (Luke 8:54). Mark uses the Greek word *korasion* for “little girl,” while Luke uses *pais*. Either word, however, can be properly rendered as child, maid or little girl.

Since Jesus spoke Aramaic, it is not surprising that Mark would leave some of the words in that original language. He also did this on other occasions. When Jesus healed the deaf man, Mark quoted Him as saying, “*Ephphatha*, that is, be opened” (Mark 7:34). In Mark 14:36 we read: “And he said, *Abba*, Father . . .” Again, in Mark 15:22 we find the following: “And they bring him into the place *Golgotha*, which is being interpreted, the place of a skull.” Finally, in Mark 15:34 we read: “. . . Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?* which is being interpreted, *My God, my God, why halt thou forsaken me?*”

In order to prove that Jesus was reciting a magic formula when he said *talitha cumi*, one would have to produce some evidence contemporary with Jesus. In his discussion of the matter in *Jesus The Magician*, Morton Smith fails to bring forth any such evidence. Smith does, however, try to link Mark 5:41 with Acts 9:36-40:

. . . *talitha koum* . . . became the basis of another phrase—if not an entire story—preserved in Acts 9:36ff. where Peter raises a dead woman conveniently named Tabitha by saying to her in Greek, “Tabitha, get up.” (*Tabitha* is a mispronunciation of *talitha*, which the storyteller mistook for a proper name.) (*Jesus The Magician*, page 95)

While there is a similarity between the words *Tabitha* and *talitha* (*Tabitha* contains the Greek letter *beta*, while *talitha* has the letter *lambda*) *koum* (or *cumi*) bears no resemblance to the Greek word translated “arise” or “get up” in Acts 9:40. This word is *anastethi*. Furthermore, there is no evidence that “*Tabitha* is a mispronunciation of *talitha*.” In fact, there is convincing evidence from the original languages that it is not a mistake. Acts 9:36 says that the woman was named “Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorkas: . . .” *Tabitha* is “An Aramaic word meaning *gazelle*” (*The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, page 1142). *Dorkas* is a Greek word which also means *gazelle* (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*). This all makes perfect sense. Peter is calling the woman by name and is telling her to “arise.” Morton Smith’s explanation, however, does not fit any of these facts. He would have us believe that it all arose through a misunderstanding.

In any case, the fact that some Aramaic words were preserved in Mark’s Gospel does not make them a “magic formula.” Even Morton Smith has preserved foreign words in his translation of ancient texts. For instance, on page 70 of *Jesus The Magician*, he translated from Plato’s writings but when he came to the word *goeteia* he merely transliterated it into English letters: “. . . in sacrifices and initiations and spells, and all prophecy and *goeteia*.”

Although Morton Smith, whose work is now used by a number of Mormon scholars who believe that Jesus was a magician, rejected the deity of Jesus, he did maintain that He did perform some “cures” through natural means:

He was born in Palestine, probably within eight or ten years of the beginning of the present era. He grew up in Galilee, was baptized by John the Baptist, formed a band of his own followers, and went about with them mainly in Galilee, but at least once visited Jerusalem and there was arrested and crucified—on these matters the gospels agree; we have no reason to question their reports.

Nor is there any reason to question their unanimous report that Jesus attracted attention as a miracle worker. Rationalists long assumed that miracles do not occur and that the gospel stories of Jesus’ miracles were legendary . . . Jesus’ “exorcisms” and “cures” are now commonly thought to have resulted from the sudden cessation of hysterical symptoms and cognate psychological disorders. . . .

Thus the external framework of Jesus’ life—the what, when, and where—is reasonably certain. Beyond these facts lie difficulties. For instance, some of his disciples thought he rose from the dead. (*Ibid.*, pages 8 and 17)

Morton Smith argued that Jesus was actually a magician who “Initiated his disciples and bound them to himself by magical rites unknown to the prophets, . . . (*Ibid.*, page 163). He also maintained that “Jesus’ exorcisms were accompanied by abnormal behavior on his part. Magicians who want to make demons obey often scream their spells, gesticulate, and match the mad in fury” (*Ibid.*, page 32). Dr. Smith seemed to give some credence to the following:

The rabbinic report that in Egypt Jesus was tattooed with magic spells . . . The antiquity of the source, type of citation, connection with the report that he was in Egypt, and agreement with Egyptian magical practices are considerable arguments in its favor.

Another consideration in its favor is its close connection with the rabbinic report that he was “a madman”—that is, occasionally manic or hysterical. (*Ibid.*, pages 150-151)

On page 47 of *Jesus The Magician*, Morton Smith argued that the following rabbinic report probably refers to Jesus coming out of Egypt with magic spells tattooed upon his body:

Rabbi Eliezer declared him guilty, but most scholars innocent. Rabbi Eliezer said to them, “But is it not [the case that] Ben Stada brought magic spells from Egypt in the scratches on his flesh?” They said to him, “He was a madman and you cannot base laws on [the actions of] madmen.” Was he then the son of Stada? Surely he was the son of Pandira? Rabbi Hisda [a third-

century Babylonian] said, “The husband was Stada, the paramour was Pandira.” [But was not] the husband Pappos ben Judah? His mother was Stada. [But was not] his mother Miriam [Mary] the hairdresser? [Yes, but she was nicknamed Stada]—as we say in Pumbeditha, ‘s’tat da [i.e., this one has turned away] from her husband.”

Although Morton Smith links “the son of Pandira” with another rabbinic story about “Jesus the son of Panteri” (*Ibid.*, page 46), he admits that the reference is confusing. He even states that the original Ben Stada was not Jesus:

. . . the rabbis are generally ignorant of chronology and constantly guilty of absurd anachronisms. . . . The original Ben Stada seems to have been a Jew who advocated some cult involving the worship of deities other than Yahweh. He was entrapped by Jews in Lydda, condemned by a rabbinic court, and stoned. Since Jesus also was accused of introducing the worship of other gods—notably himself—he was nicknamed Ben Stada. Hence it is often difficult to tell to whom the passages on “Ben Stada” refer. (*Ibid.*, page 47)

While the Bible does mention the fact that Jesus was in Egypt, Matthew 2:20 says that he was only a “young child” (*paidion*) when he was brought back to Israel.

Morton Smith tries to convince his readers that the Apostle Paul also had magic tattoos on his body: “Moreover, Paul claimed to be tattooed or branded with ‘the marks of Jesus,’ Gal. 6:17—most likely, the same marks that Jesus had carried” (*Ibid.*, page 48). The *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, page 1298, presents a far more reasonable explanation. It states that the marks which Paul had were “the marks of persecution which he bore in his body, scars suffered for the sake of the Lord Jesus, . . .” Support for this interpretation is found in 2 Corinthians 11:24-25, where Paul himself commented: “Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, . . .”

In his book *Jesus The Magician*, Dr. Smith seems willing to go to great lengths to prove his case that Jesus was linked to the occult. For instance, he gives this translation of Matthew 27:62-63:

. . . the high priests and the Pharisees met with Pilate, saying . . . “That magician said, while [he was] yet alive, ‘After three days I shall arise.’”

The word Dr. Smith translates as “magician” is *planos*. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* gives the meaning as, “roving (as a tramp), i. e. (by impl.) an imposter or misleader:—deceiver, seducing.” (Greek Word No. 4108) While it is true that a magician is a “deceiver,” there are many deceivers who are not magicians. Dr. Smith seems to be forcing his own opinion into his translation. Actually, the New Testament has a

word for a magician or sorcerer. That word is *magos*. It is used, for instance, in Acts 13:6 and 8. On page 69 of his book, Morton Smith says that “The common Greek word for ‘magician’ in Jesus’ time was *goes* (plural *goetes*).” The word *goetes* is found in 2 Timothy 3:13 and is translated as “seducers” in the King James Version: “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, . . .” This same word, however, can be translated as “wizard,” “wailer” or “enchanter.” That Matthew used *planos* instead of *magos* or *goes* seems to destroy Morton Smith’s argument.

Dr. Smith made his own translations of most of the documents used in his book. It is hard to have a great deal of confidence in these translations after we see how he rendered *planos* from the Greek text of Matthew. On page 50 of *Jesus The Magician*, Smith translated some material from the historian Suetonius who wrote about the Christians around 120 A.D.:—“Suetonius is brief: ‘Penalties were imposed on the Christians, a kind of men [holding] a new superstition [that involved the practice] of magic’ . . .” Martin A. Larson, who was convinced that Christianity had its roots in paganism, also quoted Suetonius. The reader will notice, however, that the word “magic” is not mentioned: “Suetonius, after detailing the enormities of which Nero was guilty, lists among his good works that he ‘inflicted punishment on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition’” (*The Religion of the Occident*, page 308).

Tacitus, the famous Roman historian, wrote concerning the Christian religion in the early part of the second century. He referred to the Romans charging the Christians with “hating all mankind.” Although Dr. Smith could not find a direct charge of magic in the writings of Tacitus, this did not deter him from implying that this is what the Romans had in mind: “. . . hatred of the human race is a charge appropriate to magicians as popular imagination conceived them” (*Jesus The Magician*, page 52).

About 165 A.D. a pagan by the name of Lucian wrote concerning Christianity. There appears to be nothing in Lucian’s writings to support Morton Smith’s thesis. In fact, Smith himself concedes that “Nothing is said of miracles or magic” (*Ibid.*, page 56).

Before the turn of the third century, Celsus wrote concerning Christianity. Although no copies of his work have survived, about 247 A.D. a Christian writer by the name of Origen “quoted a good deal of it, almost sentence by sentence.” Celsus does give support to the idea that Jesus was a sorcerer, but since he wrote about a century and a half after Jesus’ death, his words do not have the same weight as they would have if they were written by Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius or Pliny. Furthermore, even Dr. Smith had to admit that Celsus “drew his material from both sides and that he must be used with caution” (*Ibid.*, page 58).

One of the main sources Morton Smith uses to try to prove that Jesus was a magician is magical papyri which were penned many years after the crucifixion of Jesus. While Dr. Smith suggests that “some” of the papyri may have been originally written “at least as early as the gospels,” there is no way to know for certain, and in an article on “Magic in Early Christianity” David E. Aune informs us that “most of the magical papyri come from the third through the fifth centuries A.D. . . .” Morton Smith feels there are many important parallels between the magical papyri and the story of Jesus in the New Testament. If he could show that the papyri predated the lifetime of Jesus his parallels would be more impressive. Although Dr. Smith claims the papyri are basically pagan documents, it is clear that the Bible (either directly or indirectly) had an influence on the authors of these documents. Dr. Smith concedes that there are “references to Jesus in the papyri” (*Jesus The Magician*, Preface viii), and on page 69 of the same book, he says: “The Jews’ god, Yahweh . . . was particularly famous for his usefulness in magic. In the magical papyri (which contains a sprinkling of Jewish spells, but are mainly pagan documents) his name outnumbers that of any other deity by more than three to one.”

On page 109 of his book, Morton Smith wrote:

Chapter VI showed that the primary characteristic of a magician was to do miracles. In this Jesus evidently excelled. Through all antiquity no other man is credited with so many. The gospels contain well over 200 items about Jesus that directly involve something miraculous

...

We certainly agree that many miracles are attributed to Jesus in the New Testament. If a person believes that all miracle workers are magicians, then Jesus would have to be described as a “magician.” However, anyone who has done any serious study of the rituals used by magicians knows that they are strikingly different than what we find in the New Testament. They are filled with mysterious names. For example, we find these statements in some of the magical papyri cited in Morton Smith’s book:

“I conjure you by the god of the Hebrews, Jesus, laba, tae, Abraoth, Aia, Thoth,” etc. (page 63)

Spell said to the cup. Say seven [times], “You are wine; you are not wine but the head of Athena. You are wine; you are not wine but the entrails of Osiris, the entrails of Iso Pakerbeth, Eternal Sun o o o . . . i a a a”—To make it compulsive [add] “Abianathanalba akrammachamarei e e e, the [angel] put in charge of compulsion, Jacob la lao Sabaoth Adonai Abrasax”. . . (page 111)

Adonai, Abrasax, Pinouti and Sabaos [*sic*], fire the soul and heart of him, Amonios, whom Helen bore, for him, Serapiacus, whom Threpta bore, now, now quick, quick! (page 124)

These complicated and mysterious rituals should be contrasted with stories in the New Testament where Jesus cast out demons:

And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. (Mark 1:25)

For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. (Mark 5:5)

When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. (Mark 9:25)

The absence of all the hocus-pocus of magic is evident in these passages. Dr. Smith tries to explain away the lack of magical ritual by saying it was suppressed. Speaking of the report of Jesus' baptism, he said:

No gospel says anything of any ritual, though the baptism must have been accompanied by prayers and thanksgivings (possibly also by hymns) and effected with some regular form of actions and formula of words. The omission of such elements here—in spite of their importance to the event—should warn us that elsewhere the absence of reference to ritual does not prove that none was used. We have seen that rituals and formulae were apt to be taken as evidence of magic, and therefore to be deleted . . . (*Jesus The Magician*, page 96)

In discussing the story of the descent of the spirit we showed that its closest parallels are found in accounts of magical rites. Indeed it seems to be an abbreviated version of such a magical account—abbreviated to eliminate the magical traits. (*Ibid.*, page 145)

Dr. Smith gives no manuscript evidence to support his serious accusations. He knows that the New Testament as we have it does not provide the support he needs to prove Jesus was a magician. Therefore, he claims that much of the magic material has been deleted. He seems to feel that even the original authors of the Gospels strove to remove magical elements out of Jesus' life:

Sometimes it is clear that stories have been revised to get rid of magical details. The exorcism in Mk. 5 is a good example. According to Mark, Jesus makes the demon tell his name. This was standard magical

practice; once you knew the name you could use it to order the demon out. But in Mark the exorcism proper has been deleted, so the question is useless. Even that was too much for Matthew; he deleted the question as well (8.29f.). Matthew's consistent deletion of magical traits has been demonstrated by Hull, *Hellenistic Magic*, 116ff. Such censorship left most references to magical procedure in the gospels scattered and isolated, one term here, another there. (*Ibid.*, page 145)

On page 131, Dr. Smith even spoke of Matthew's "dislike of magical traits."

Morton Smith observed:

One of the commonest forms of exorcism was to order the demon out "by the name of" some more powerful being, usually a god whose "true name" or "true" title or function the magician knew. (*Ibid.*, page 35)

David E. Aune, however, pointed out that although Jesus' disciples used his name to cast out devils "there is no evidence to suggest that Jesus himself invoked the name of God or any other powerful names in the rituals which he used to effect exorcisms and healings, . . ."

Although it would be hard to deny that magic had some influence on the Israelites, the Bible condemns its practice in many places. In the Old Testament we read:

When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to, do after the abominations of those nations.

There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,

Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.

For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do. (Deuteronomy 18:9-14)

In the New Testament witchcraft is listed among the evil "works of the flesh":

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

Acts 19:19 informs us concerning some people who “used curious arts” before they were converted. At the time they confessed the Lord, however, they “brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.”

## JESUS AND JOSEPH

While Morton Smith would have us believe that Jesus was a magician, the evidence he presents is very weak. It is interesting to compare this evidence with that which has come to light concerning Joseph Smith. To begin with, Dr. Smith has to use a dubious translation of Matthew 27:63 to support his claim that the Jews told Pilate that Jesus was a “magician.” In Joseph Smith’s case, however, we have an original document which proves that he was a “glass looker” and that he was arrested, tried and found guilty by a justice of the peace in Bainbridge, N. Y. in 1826. This document is Justice Albert Neeley’s bill showing the costs involved in several trials held in 1826. The fifth item from the top mentions the trial of “Joseph Smith The Glass Looker.” According to the court record, which was first printed in *Fraser’s Magazine* in 1873, Joseph Smith himself confessed that “he had a certain stone which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were; that he professed to tell in this manner where gold mines were a distance underground, . . . and . . . had occasionally been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years, . . .” (*Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 32).

The 1826 trial proves beyond all doubt that Joseph Smith used a stone which he placed in his hat to try to locate buried treasures. This was, of course, a common practice by magicians and those who were involved in the occult.

In *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, pages 3-17, we have a photograph of a magic talisman which was owned by Joseph Smith and photographs of magic parchments which were owned by his brother Hyrum. Furthermore, we have a revelation which Joseph Smith published in which he endorsed the use of a divining rod. While Morton Smith is unable to find any evidence written during Jesus’ lifetime that would support his claim that He was a sorcerer, we have an abundance of affidavits and statements by people who personally knew Joseph Smith and witnessed his participation in magical activities (see our publications *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry* and *Joseph Smith and Money-Digging*).

Morton Smith had to resort to a great deal of speculation and wishful thinking in his attempt to prove that Jesus was a magician. The case against Joseph Smith, however, is built on contemporary documents and testimony which appears to be irrefutable.

## BENSON TAKES OVER

The day Mormon historians and other liberal members of the Mormon church have feared for many years has finally arrived. With the death of Spencer W. Kimball, Ezra Taft Benson has become the thirteenth President of the Mormon church. Through the years Mr. Benson has been so dogmatic in his views about politics and religion that he has acquired many enemies. One Mormon, in fact, told us that if Benson ever became President of the church, he would know that there is no truth in Mormonism. Even some of the top leaders of the church have had problems with him. On January 4, 1964, Drew Pearson made the following comment concerning Benson: “Benson has become so extreme in his views that the Mormon Church, of which he is one of the Twelve Apostles, has quietly transferred him abroad to head the church’s European mission” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, January 4, 1964). President David O. McKay denied the accusation, but the newspapers let the “cat out of the bag” when they published two letters written to Rep. Ralph R. Harding. One of them was written by Joseph Fielding Smith, who became the tenth president of the Mormon church:

I am glad to report to you that. it will be some time before we hear anything from Brother Benson, who is now on his way to Great Britain where I suppose he will be at least for the next two years. When he returns, I hope his blood will be purified. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, February 21, 1964)

After the death of Joseph Fielding Smith, Mr. Benson rapidly rose to great power within Mormonism. On February 25, 1974, the Brigham Young University’s *Daily Universe* reported the following:

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — . . . Ezra Taft Benson, . . . said, in an interview this week, it is “entirely possible” the president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) will one day declare support for a political candidate. . . . Benson, . . . said he has never had to separate his religion from his politics.

In 1980, with the failing health of President Kimball, Ezra Taft Benson must have realized that he was very close to becoming “Prophet, Seer and Revelator,” or as the Apostle McConkie phrased it, “king of the kingdom on earth” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, pages 415-416). At that time Benson made very clear the powers he would have when he became President of the Mormon church:

FIRST: *The Prophet is the Only Man Who Speaks For The Lord in Everything.* . . . We are to “give heed unto all his words”—as if from the Lord’s “own mouth.”

SECOND: *The Living Prophet Is More Vital to Us Than The Standard Works.* . . .

THIRD: *The Living Prophet is More Important to Us Than a Dead Prophet.* . . . the most important prophet so far as you and I are concerned is the one living in our day . . . Therefore the most important reading we can do is any of the words of the Prophet contained each week in the Church Section of the *Deseret News*, and any words of the Prophet contained each month in our Church magazines. Our marching orders for each six months are found in the General Conference addresses which are printed in the *Ensign* magazine. . . .

Beware of those who would pit the dead prophets against the living prophets, for the living prophets always take precedence.

FOURTH: *The Prophet Will Never Lead The Church Astray.* . . .

FIFTH: *The Prophet is Not Required to Have Any Particular Earthly Training or Credentials to Speak on Any Subject or Act on Any Matter at Any Time.* . . .

SIXTH: *The Prophet Does Not Have to Say “Thus Saith the Lord” to Give Us Scripture.* . . .

SEVENTH: *The Prophet Tells Us What We Need to Know, Not Always What We Want to Know* . . . some so-called experts of political science want the prophet to keep still on politics. . . .

NINTH: *The Prophet Can Receive Revelation on Any Matter—Temporal or Spiritual.* . . .

TENTH: *The Prophet May be involved in Civic Matters.*

When a people are righteous they want the best to lead them in government. Alma was the head of the Church and of the government in the Book of Mormon: . . . Those who would remove prophets from politics would take God out of government. (“Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophets,” February 26, 1980; full text available in *Following the Brethren*)

Since Ezra Taft Benson is 86 years of age, he will not be able to run for the presidency of the United States. (At one time he told a reporter that “he could have had the American Independent Party vice presidential nomination, but turned it down after consultation with President McKay.”) It seems unlikely, also, that he will be able to make the major revisions in the church that he might have made if he were younger.

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