

TEMPLE RITUAL ALTERED

Mormon Leaders Delete Some of the "Most Sacred" Parts of Ceremony

In response to Fawn M. Brodie's book, *No Man Knows My History*, the noted Mormon apologist Hugh Nibley declared:

Yet of all churches in the world **only this one has not found it necessary to readjust any part of its doctrine** in the last hundred years. . . . How does Brodie explain the fact that the doctrine which she claims was the haphazard outgrowth of complete opportunism remains **the most stable on earth?** (*No Ma'am That's Not History*, 1946, pp. 46-47)

Although most Mormons have always placed a great deal of weight in Dr. Nibley's arguments, recent developments within the church itself will undoubtedly cause many to wonder about his claims concerning doctrinal stability. The *New York Times* gave this startling report in an article which begins on the first page of the issue dated May 3, 1990:

The Mormon Church has changed some of its most sacred rituals, eliminating parts of the largely secret ceremonies that have been viewed as offensive to women and to members of some other faiths.

Last month the church . . . quietly dropped from its temple rituals a vow in which women pledged obedience to their husbands . . . and a portrayal of non-Mormon clergy as hirelings of Satan.

Church officials have confirmed that changes went into effect in mid-April, but the ceremonies are considered to be too sacred, they say, for them to comment further. . . . More specific information on the changes has been provided to the news media by Mormons participating in the rituals at the church's 43 temples around the world and by former Mormons who are critical of the rituals. A number of Mormons who would not discuss details of the rituals verified that these reports were "pretty factual" or "not inaccurate." . . .

NEW BOOK ON TEMPLE

Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, 1842-1990, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This book will contain reprints of early accounts of the temple endowment ceremony so that the reader can see how the ritual evolved over the years. It will also have testimony on the ritual which was given before a committee of the U.S. Senate and evidence showing that Joseph Smith borrowed from Masonry in creating his temple ceremony. **Regular Price: \$4.00**

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President Ezra Taft Benson

"Because the temple ceremony is sacred to us, we don't speak about it except in the most general terms," said Beverly Campbell, the East Coast director for public communications for the Church . . . she said "the ceremony itself needs to meet the needs of the people." The revised ritual is "more in keeping with the sensitivities we have as a society," she added.

Lavina Fielding Anderson, who will soon become an editor of the *Journal of Mormon History*, said she "greeted the changes with a great deal of joy," and added, "The temple ceremony in the past has given me a message that could be interpreted as subservient and exclusionary."

In the place of an oath of obedience that men took to God and the church, the previous ceremony required women to vow obedience to their husbands . . .

Although Ms. Anderson would not describe any of the changes, she said the revision "gives me hope and renewed faith that changes will occur in the future as they have in the past." . . .

The ceremony also contains elements resembling the Masonic rituals current in 1830, when Joseph Smith founded the church . . .

The latest revisions diminish these elements, including gestures symbolizing the participant's pledge to undergo a gruesome death rather than reveal the rituals. Also dropped is a scene in which Satan hires a non-Mormon "preacher" to spread false teachings. . . .

Ross Peterson, the editor of *Dialogue*, an independent Mormon quarterly, said the unfamiliar elements of the ritual frequently "catches young Mormons cold" and disturbs them.

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“I’ve known an awful lot of people who went once and it was years before they’d go back, especially women,” he said. . . .

Bruce L. Olsen, managing director of the church’s communications office in Salt Lake City, denied that the changes were made in response to criticism or social pressure. The Mormon Church believes “in continued and modern revelation,” Mr. Olsen said, so that practices might be changed when “the Lord clarified” church teaching. . . .

But some Mormons see the church as responding, without admitting it, both to critics and to the church’s growth overseas. . . .

Among the critics are many conservative Christians who complain that Mormonism features occult practices.

The *Arizona Republic* (April 28, 1990) referred to the modifications in the ceremony as “Revolutionary changes.” The same article went on to state:

The changes in the Temple Endowment Ceremony are seen as a move to bring the secret ceremony closer to mainstream Christianity. The changes are the most drastic revisions of the century. . . .

Church officials in Salt Lake City refused to discuss the ceremony, which is shrouded in secrecy. In fact, the church has issued a directive to temple members telling them to refrain from talking about the changes in the ceremony. . . .

Another prominent Mormon, who asked not to be identified, confirmed that portions of the ceremony have been removed.

“The temple ceremony has been significantly abridged,” he said. . . .

Changes in the ceremony include: . . . A modified version of the woman’s vow of obedience to the husband. . . .

“I think this is in response to the feminist movement in the Mormon Church,” said Sandra Tanner, a former Mormon who now heads Utah Lighthouse Ministries in Salt Lake City. “Many of the women objected to the obedience.”

An article by Associated Press writer Vern Anderson also noted that the ceremony has “undergone what some view as their most significant changes this century.” He went on to say:

The revisions, effective April 10 in the faith’s 43 temples, are being greeted with enthusiasm by church members who say they reflect a greater sensitivity toward women and other religions.

“The temple is an important part of my spiritual life and the changes have allowed me to go to the temple with renewed joy,” said Lavina Fielding Anderson. . . .

“The general consensus is that it’s a breath of fresh air,” said Ross Peterson, co-editor of *Dialogue*, an independent Mormon journal. . . .

Peterson said many Mormons who never had expressed a negative word about the endowment ceremony are thrilled with the changes, indicating there had been elements that “were silently upsetting them.”

“I think we’re gradually moving away from the subjugation of women,” Peterson said. . . .

Rebecca England. . . . said the changes may boost temple attendance.

“I know quite a number of Mormons who stopped going to the temple because they found it demeaning. And I think this revised ceremony addresses many of the concerns” . . .

The changes were not announced to the membership at large, but temple attendees are being read a statement from the governing First Presidency which says the revisions, following long and prayerful review, were unanimously approved by that

three-member body and the advisory Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 29, 1990)

On May 5, 1990, the *Los Angeles Times* printed an article by John Dart. In this article we find the following:

The central temple ceremony in the Mormon Church has been changed to eliminate the woman’s vow to obey her husband. . . . In the new version of the rites, women now pledge to obey God and to merely listen to the advice of their husbands.

“That’s the most significant change in the church since blacks received the priesthood in 1978,” said Ron Priddis, vice president of Signature Books. . . .

The new version “reflects greater sensitivity and awareness of women and women’s role in the Christian church,” said Robert Rees, a Mormon bishop. . . . Although unwilling to disclose elements of the ritual, Rees nevertheless said that some parts eliminated “were historical and cultural anachronisms.”

On June 2, 1990, the *Salt Lake Tribune* ran an article by *Los Angeles Times* writer John Dart. In that article, Mr. Dart reported:

Most Mormon Church members quoted last month in news stories about revisions in the church’s confidential temple ceremony have been summoned for interviews by church officials. . . . One man said he was reprimanded for talking to the press and another was asked to surrender his “temple recommend”. . . . The public communications office of the Church. . . . issued a statement Thursday, defending the questioning of members and re-emphasizing the sacred confidentiality of the temples.

REVEALED BY GOD

Mormon leaders have always proclaimed that the temple ritual—often referred to as the “temple endowment” because the recipients are supposed to be “endowed with power from on high”—was given to Joseph Smith, the first Mormon prophet, by revelation. The ordinances in this ritual, which are performed for both the living and the dead (by proxy), are considered to be “most sacred.” A person has to go through these ceremonies before becoming a missionary and those who desire to be married in the temple for “time and eternity” must first have their “temple endowments.”

Mormon theology teaches that those who are married in the temple can eventually become Gods and rule over their own creations. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie affirmed that the righteous who are married in the temple “for time and eternity” have “gained eternal life (exaltation), the greatest of all the gifts of God. . . . Those so inheriting are the sons and daughters of God. . . . They are joint-heirs with Christ. . . . becoming **gods** in their own right” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, pp. 117-118). President Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth prophet of the church, made the matter very clear:

It fills my heart with sadness when I see in the paper the name of a daughter or a son of members of this Church, and discover that she or he is going to have a ceremony and be married outside of the temple of the Lord, because I realize what it means, that **they are cutting themselves off from exaltation in the kingdom of God**. . . . These young people who seem to be so happy now, when they rise in the resurrection—and find themselves in the condition in which they will find themselves—then there will be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and bitterness of soul. . . .

Civil Marriage Makes **Servants In Eternity**. . . . Celestial Marriage Makes **Gods In Eternity**. . . . it is open to us; it is a free gift; it doesn't cost us anything; *only righteousness, faith, obedience*; and surely we can pay that price. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, pp. 60-63)

Mormons who go through the temple ceremony and are sealed in marriage for eternity believe that they will not only become Gods, but will also continue to have children throughout all eternity. They will people other worlds with their spiritual children and these children will worship and pray to the husband as God. Mormons feel that the God of the Bible was not always God and that he also had to pass through the same endowments to achieve deity. Wilford Woodruff, who became the fourth prophet of the Mormon Church, proclaimed that "the Lord had His endowments long ago; it is thousands and millions of years since He received His blessings . . . He is far in advance of us" (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, p. 192).

According to a revelation given by Joseph Smith, those who will not submit to Celestial Marriage are

. . . appointed angels in heaven, which angels are **ministering servants**, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory . . . these angels . . . remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not Gods, but are angels of God forever and ever. (*Doctrine and Covenants* 132:16-17)

Although faithful Mormons have written many articles and books on temples, they have been very careful not to tell what actually goes on in the endowment ritual. One of the most revealing and concise statements, however, comes from comments President Brigham Young made in 1877. These comments were recorded in the diary of L. John Nuttall. The second prophet of the church remarked:

When we got our washings and anointings under the hands of the Prophet Joseph at Nauvoo, we had only one room to work in, with the exception of a little side room or office where we were washed and anointed, had our garment placed upon us and received our new name; and after he had performed these ceremonies, he gave the key-words, signs, tokens, and penalties. Then after, we went into the large room . . . Joseph Smith divided up the room the best that he could, hung up the veil, marked it, gave us our instructions as we passed along from one department to another, giving us signs, tokens, penalties, with the key-words pertaining to those signs. (Statement of Brigham Young, recorded in the diary of L. John Nuttall, February 7, 1877, as cited in *God, Man, And The Universe*, by Hyrum L. Andrus, 1968, p. 334)

The reader will notice that President Young mentioned washings, anointings, garments, the new name, the key-words, signs, tokens and penalties. He also stated that there was a "veil" with certain marks on it. On another occasion, Brigham Young made it clear that the endowment contains secret information that the initiated need to get into heaven: "Your *endowment* is, to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord . . . to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell" (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, p. 31). Those who have actually been through the ceremony affirm that secret grips, signs and key-words are learned during the ceremony which will be needed after death for a person to gain entrance into God's

presence. It is at the "veil" that the Lord himself questions the candidate who desires to enter into his presence.

The fact that the temple ritual was changed by the present leaders of the church will undoubtedly cause serious problems for many devout members of the church who feel that these ceremonies cannot be tampered with. They will probably have a difficult time understanding how the General Authorities can meddle with a sacred ceremony which was supposed to have been given by revelation to Joseph Smith.

The inspired nature of the ritual has been impressed on the minds of the Mormon people since the 1840's. Even before the Nauvoo temple was built, Joseph Smith gave a revelation foretelling that God himself was about to restore the ancient mysteries that had been lost from the earth:

. . . build a house to my name, for the Most High to dwell therein. For there is not a place found on earth that he may come to and **restore again that which was lost** unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fulness of the priesthood. . . . And verily I say unto you, let this house be built unto my name, that **I may reveal mine ordinances** therein . . . For I deign **to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world**, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fulness of times. And I will show unto my servant Joseph all things pertaining to this house, and the priesthood thereof, and the place whereon it shall be built. (*Doctrine and Covenants* 124:27-28, 40-42)

After Joseph Smith received the endowment ceremony, it was accepted as a divine revelation from God. Since that time church leaders have continued to stress that the endowment came from heaven. Apostle John A. Widtsoe, for instance, wrote the following: "Joseph Smith received the temple endowment and its ritual, as all else that he promulgated, by revelation from God" (*Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth, Prophet of God*, 1951, p. 249). Apostle Bruce R. McConkie wrote the following under the title "Temple Ordinances": "Certain gospel ordinances are of such a sacred and holy nature that the Lord authorizes their performance only in holy sanctuaries prepared and dedicated for that very purpose. . . . They were given in modern times to the Prophet Joseph Smith by revelation, many things connected with them being translated by the Prophet from the papyrus on which the Book of Abraham was recorded" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 779). The current prophet of the church, Ezra Taft Benson, does not hesitate to affirm that the endowment ritual came by revelation:

The endowment was revealed by revelation and can be understood only by revelation. . . .

This temple . . . is a place of revelation. . . . The laws and ordinances which cause men and women to come out of the world and become sanctified are administered only in these holy places. They were given by revelation and are comprehended by revelation. (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 1988, pp. 250, 252)

In the past, Mormon leaders have not only taught that the endowment came by revelation, but also that it was not changed since the time of Joseph Smith. Just after the church passed into the 20th century, there was an attempt to remove Mormon Senator Reed Smoot from his seat. These lengthy hearings are usually referred to as the *Reed Smoot Case*. Although Senator Smoot retained his seat, the hearings proved to be very embarrassing for the church because of the testimony given concerning polygamy after the Manifesto and charges of Mormon Church interference in politics. In any case, when Senator Smoot, who was also an apostle in the church, was

questioned about the endowment ceremony, he responded: “. . . the endowments have **never changed**; as I understand it, it has been **so testified**, and that Joseph Smith, jr., himself was the founder of the endowments” (*Reed Smoot Case*, vol. 3, p. 185).

On page 140 of the same volume, the following statements by President Joseph F. Smith, the sixth prophet of the church, were entered into the record:

It [the Nauvoo temple] was finished . . . and was dedicated unto the Lord. The ordinances of the house of God were administered therein as they had been taught to the leading authorities of the church by the Prophet Joseph Smith himself. The same gospel, the same ordinances, the same authority and blessings that were administered by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and taught by him to his associates, are now being enjoyed by and taught to the Latter-Day Saints in the four temples . . . When you hear anybody say we have changed the ordinances, that we have transgressed the laws, or broken the everlasting covenants which were entered into under the personal administration of the Prophet Joseph Smith, tell them for me . . . and for all those who are living to-day who received blessings and ordinances under the hands of the Prophet Joseph Smith, that they are in error. The same gospel prevails to-day, and the same ordinances are administered today, both for the living and for the dead, as were administered by the prophet himself and delivered by him to the church.

These statements by President Smith were originally printed in the church’s newspaper, *Deseret Evening News*, December 1, 1900. President Smith’s son, Joseph Fielding Smith, who served as the tenth prophet of the church in the early 1970’s, printed an affidavit by Bathsheba W. Smith which contained the following:

Near the close of the year 1843, or in the beginning of the year 1844, I received the ordinance of anointing . . . the same day . . . I received my endowment . . . The endowments were given under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith . . . there has been no change, to my certain knowledge, in these ceremonies, They are the same today as they were then. (*Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage*, p. 87)

Mormon leaders have not only taught that their church has not changed its doctrines and ordinances, but they have pointed to changes by other churches as evidence of apostacy. In an editorial published in the Church Section of the *Deseret News*, June 5, 1965, we find the following:

. . . God is **unchangeable**, the same yesterday, today and forever. . . . The great mistake made down through the ages by teachers of Christianity, is that they have supposed they could place their own private interpretation upon scriptures, allow their own personal convenience to become a controlling factor, and change the basis of [C]hristian law and practice to suit themselves. This is **apostacy**.

The Gospel **can not possibly be changed** . . . the saving principles must ever be the same. They can **never change**. . . . the Gospel must always be the same in **all of its parts**. . . . **no one can change** the Gospel . . . if they attempt to do so, they only set up a **man-made** system which is not the Gospel, but is merely a reflection of their own views. . . . if we substitute “any other Gospel,” there is no salvation in it. . . . the Lord and His Gospel remain **the same—always**.

In 1982, W. Grant Bangerter, executive director of the Temple Department and a member of the First Quorum of Seventy, made it very clear that the temple ceremony could not be changed:

“As temple work progresses, some members wonder if the ordinances can be changed or adjusted. These ordinances have been provided by revelation, and are in the hands of the First Presidency. Thus, the temple is protected from tampering.” (*Deseret News*, Church Section, January 16, 1982)

It would appear that instead of protecting the ordinances, the current First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles have themselves been “tampering” with them. It is interesting to note that the first Mormon prophet, Joseph Smith, proclaimed that the ordinances could never be changed:

Now the purpose in Himself in the winding up scene of the last dispensation is that all things pertaining to that dispensation should be conducted precisely in accordance with the preceding dispensations. . . . He **set the ordinances to be the same forever and ever**, and set Adam to watch over them, to reveal them from heaven to man, or to send angels to reveal them. (*History of the Church*, vol. 4, p. 208)

The Book of Mormon itself accuses the Catholics of conspiring to alter the Bible. It bluntly states that “many plain and precious things” have been deliberately removed:

. . . thou seest the formation of that great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away. . . . this they have done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men. . . . thou seest that after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book . . . because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book . . . an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them. (Book of Mormon, I Nephi 13:26-30)

Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., the son of the tenth prophet of the church, charged:

The Bible alone is an insufficient guide because the “plainness of the gospel” has been removed. . . . The early “apostate fathers” did not think it was wrong to tamper with inspired scripture. If any scripture seemed to endanger their viewpoint, it was altered, transplanted or completely removed from the biblical text. All this was done that they might keep their traditions. Such mutilation was considered justifiable to preserve the so-called “purity” of their doctrines. (*Religious Truths Defined*, 1959, pp. 175-176)

Mormon Apostle Mark E. Petersen bluntly stated: “Many insertions were made [in the Bible], some of them ‘slanted’ for selfish purposes, while at times deliberate falsifications and fabrications were perpetrated” (*As Translated Correctly*, 1966, p. 4).

The current prophet of the church, President Ezra Taft Benson, emphatically proclaimed: “The Book of Mormon is the keystone in our witness of Jesus Christ . . . **Unlike the Bible**, which passed through generations of copyists, translators and **corrupt religionists who tampered with the text**, the Book of Mormon came from writer to reader in just one inspired step of translation” (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 1988, page 53).

Since Mormon leaders and apologists have freely criticized other churches for making changes and have claimed that their doctrines are “the most stable on earth,” the General Authorities

of the church must have approached the question of changing the temple ceremony with a great deal of caution. David John Buerger informs us that when some procedural changes were suggested in the temple ceremony some years ago, “initial opposition came from Elder Harold B. Lee due to what he perceived as ‘doctrinal tampering’” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Winter 1987, p. 63). Harold B. Lee later became the 11th prophet of the church. While minor changes have been made in the ceremony during the last few decades, they appear insignificant when compared with those made on April 10, 1990.

We would suspect that the Mormon leaders must have decided to make the present changes many months ago. Since “motion pictures have replaced some of the live actors” in most of the temples, it follows that it would take time to make new films containing the changes. The *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 29, 1990, reported that the “new endowment film, the fifth since the 1950s, incorporates the most recent revisions” (*The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 1976, p. 574). It should also be noted that it would take time to make new translations of the changes for the foreign temples.

We may never know for certain whether George P. Lee, who was a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, knew of the proposed changes in the temple ceremony before his excommunication was announced in the September 2, 1989, issue of the *Salt Lake Tribune*. It is interesting to note, however, that in a letter “To the First Presidency and the Twelve,” Lee did mention his concern that other church leaders felt they could change the gospel:

7. I have heard a few of you declare that you are greater than ancient apostles such as Moses, Abraham, Noah[,] Is[a]jah, Isaac, Jacob and etc. This reflects the attitude of all of you.

8. I have heard one of [or?] more of you declare that **you can change anything Jesus had said or taught**. This also reflects the attitude of all of you. (Letter by George P. Lee, photographically printed in *Excommunication of a Mormon Church Leader*, page 54)

Less than two weeks before the changes were made in the temple, President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, expressed concern about members of the church talking about the temple ceremony: “I remind you of the absolute obligation to not discuss outside the temple that which occurs within the temple. Sacred matters deserve sacred consideration. We are under obligation, binding and serious, to not use temple language or speak of temple matters outside . . . do not discuss outside of the temple that which occurs in the temple. . . . when you leave the doors of the House of the Lord, be true to a sacred trust to speak not of that which is holy and sanctified” (*The Ensign*, May 1990, p. 52). It seems obvious that President Hinckley gave this warning in an attempt to keep members from talking about the changes which were to be made in the ceremony ten days later. It is obvious, of course, that Hinckley’s admonition was not followed by many members of the church and therefore accounts of the changes in the ritual made their way to the news media. We had been told that changes would be made some time before they actually took place, and members of the church discussed them with us after they were made.

It is interesting to note that the changes in the temple ceremony were put into effect immediately after the church’s general conference had ended (the conference ended April 1st and the changes were made on April 10th). The temple presidents were apparently given instructions about the changes

before they returned from conference to their work in the various temples throughout the world. The general membership of the church, however, left the conference completely in the dark with regard to what was about to happen to their sacred ritual. Since it would be six months before another general conference would take place, any dissenting opinions or discussion of the changes would have to take place on a local level.

Church leader Joseph Fielding Smith declared that “One of the greatest blessings given to mankind is the gift of free agency” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, vol. 3, p. 46). As far as we can determine, faithful Latter-day Saints were given no chance to exercise their free agency with regard to the changes made in the endowment ceremony. The method of handling this whole matter, however, was in accord with a statement which appeared in the official Mormon publication, *Improvement Era*, June 1945 (p. 354): “When our leaders speak, **the thinking has been done**. When they propose a plan—it is **God’s plan**. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy.”

Although it is often ignored, the church actually has a doctrine of “common consent” which should have applied to the alterations made in the temple ritual. In a revelation given by Joseph Smith in July 1830 we find the following: “And all things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith, for all things you shall receive by faith. Amen” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 26:2). Section 28:13 reaffirms that “all things must be done in order, and by common consent in the church . . .”

Joseph F. Smith, the sixth prophet of the church, testified as follows in the Reed Smoot investigation: “Mr. Smith.—I will say this, Mr. Chairman, that no revelation given through the head of the church ever becomes binding and authoritative upon the members of the church until it has been presented to the church and accepted by them” (*Reed Smoot Case*, vol. 1, p. 96). Apostle John Henry Smith gave this testimony in vol. 2, p. 321:

Mr. Smith. Yes, sir; he [the prophet] receives revelations; but the revelations must be accepted by his church by vote.

Mr. Taylor. So that what the Almighty orders depends on whether the people who are ordered want to do it or not?

Mr. Smith. Yes, sir; there is no force on the Mormon people.

Apostle James E. Talmage likewise testified: “If it is a revelation it is a revelation, and amounts to just so much; but as to being a binding law upon the church—a law of practice and action—it would have to be first adopted by the church to become such” (*Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 80).

From the testimony given by the Mormon leaders, a person would certainly be led to believe that a major revision of the temple ritual (a ceremony which was supposed to have been given by revelation) would have to be approved by church members before it would be binding on the Mormon people and used in the church’s 43 temples. For the General Authorities to drop out important portions of a ceremony they claim came from God himself, seems far worse than what they have charged the Catholics with doing. After all, the Book of Mormon’s accusation that the “great and abominable church” removed “many plain and precious things” from the Bible (a charge which the Mormon leaders cannot prove) relates to portions that would have been available at one time to everyone that had access to the Biblical text. The items which were removed from the temple ceremony were supposed to have been so sacred that they were never revealed to the world. These secret ceremonies could

only be found in the temples of the Lord. These rituals, in fact, purport to give the information on how men may become Gods!

Mormon leaders who have now passed away would have been shocked at what the present leaders altered or removed from the temple ceremony. Apostle James E. Talmage emphasized:

No jot, iota, or tittle of the temple rites is otherwise than uplifting and sanctifying. In every detail the endowment ceremony contributes to covenants of morality of life, consecration of person to high ideals, devotion to truth, patriotism to nation, and allegiance to God. (*The House of the Lord*, 1968, p. 84)

As the newspaper accounts have stated, the Mormon leaders have removed the “penalties” which were previously held to be extremely important and sacred. The reader will remember that we have quoted President Brigham Young as saying that Joseph Smith himself “gave the key-words, signs, tokens, and penalties.” Before the recent changes in the ceremony, it was stressed in the ceremony itself that the penalties were sacred:

We are required to give you the First Tokens of the Aaronic Priesthood. Before doing this, however, we desire to impress upon your minds the sacred character of the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign and penalty, together with that of all the other Tokens of the Holy Priesthood, with their accompanying names, signs and penalties, which you will receive in the temple this day. They are most sacred and are guarded by solemn covenants and obligations of secrecy to the effect that under no condition, even at the peril of your life, will you ever divulge them . . . The representation of the penalties indicates different ways in which life may be taken. (*Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* p. 468)

From this it is very clear that the penalties, which have now been removed from the temple ritual, were previously considered to be “most sacred.”

Harold B. Lee, who later became the twelfth prophet of the church, compared the things found in the temple ritual to the “pearls” that Jesus mentioned in Matthew 7:6:

But we say the ordinances are sacred as contrasted with just being secret. . . . the Master said, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.” . . . in temples like this, there could be revealed that which couldn’t be had otherwise. (*Improvement Era*, Feb. 1965, p. 123, as cited in *Achieving a Celestial Marriage*, p. 202)

Other Mormon leaders have also identified the elements of the temple ceremony with the pearls mentioned by Christ. If this were the case, it would appear that the Mormon leaders have now thrown away some of their “most sacred” pearls!

SECRETS LEAK OUT

Joseph Smith swore those who took part in the endowments to secrecy, but because of his practice of plural marriage and other doctrines he taught, many of his followers became alienated from the Mormon Church and some of them revealed the contents of the ritual. An account was published as early as April 15, 1846, in the *Warsaw Signal*. Increase McGee Van Dusen and his wife exposed the temple ceremony in 1847, and their account was reprinted several times. Many other exposes were printed in the 19th century. As we noted earlier, the Reed Smoot investigation took place just after the turn of the century. At that time many people who had been through the ritual were questioned regarding its contents. While a number refused to talk about it, others spoke concerning what went on in the temples. Their testimony was printed by the United States Government in four volumes.

In 1889 John Moore and W.J. Edgar were denied citizenship because it was believed that they had taken “an oath or obligation incompatible with the oath of citizenship . . .” As in the Reed Smoot investigation, Mormons or those who had formerly been Mormons were called upon to give testimony concerning the temple ceremony. In the “Temple Lot Case,” a dispute over the property on which a temple was to be built, additional testimony was given concerning the ritual. Much of this testimony appears in a large volume entitled, *The Temple Lot Case*.

On February 12, 1906, the *Salt Lake Tribune* printed the temple ritual, and in 1931, W. M. Paden published an account of the endowment ceremony in *Temple Mormonism—Its Evolution, Ritual and Meaning*. In 1964, William J. Whalen printed the ceremony (see *Latter-Day Saints in the Modern Day World*), and two years later John L. Smith, a Baptist minister, published the ritual in *I Visited the Temple*.

In 1964, we reprinted Paden’s 1931 publication concerning the temple ceremony. We suspected, however, that there had been some changes in the ceremony over the years. Since we wanted to publish the most accurate account possible, we had a couple who had been through the ritual about fifty times revise Paden’s work. Later, however, a man who had been through the temple approximately 120 times heard that we were preparing to publish the ritual and felt that it was important that the most accurate account possible should be given to the world. He, therefore, volunteered to bring the ceremony right up to date. We published this account in vol. 1 of *The Mormon Kingdom* in 1969, and later we incorporated this same account into our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* Tens of thousands of copies have been distributed throughout the world since that time. It was our feeling that Mormons should have the right to know what they were getting into before they were sworn to secrecy and had to take part in the demonstration of the penalties. Although we felt that we were performing an important service for the Mormon people, many people were horrified that we would dare to print the ritual. Nevertheless, a number of Mormon scholars verified that we had produced an extremely accurate account of the ceremony. Many Mormons had a difficult time believing that God would allow anyone to reproduce the ritual and found it hard to believe that a printed copy actually existed. Writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 1990, John Dart commented: “Some candid Mormon officials have acknowledged in interviews that the whole secret ritual was published years ago by church critics Jerald and Sandra Tanner of Salt Lake City.”

The Salt Lake City Public Library obtained a number of copies of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* Unfortunately, however, there was a continual problem with people ripping or cutting out pages which related to the temple endowment. Some people wondered if the church would allow us to continue to publish the ritual. We shared the same concern, but, as it turned out, the Mormons allowed us to continue exercising our freedom of religion and of the press.

In any case, as far as the Mormon Church was concerned, the situation turned from bad to worse. About eleven years after our publication of the ceremony, Bob Whitte and Gordon H. Fraser printed the ritual in a pamphlet entitled, *What’s Going On In Here?* Later, Chuck and Dolly Sackett published a pamphlet with a similar title, *What’s Going On In There?* The Sackett’s pamphlet was unique in that on page 4 of the booklet they claimed that their printing “was transcribed from a tape recording made inside the temple during the actual Endowment ceremony.” While Mormons questioned the ethics of someone secretly recording the ceremony, no one seemed to doubt that the tape recording had actually been made. The Sacketts, who

had previously been deeply involved in genealogy and temple work for the church, went a step further and began duplicating copies of the tape recording so that others could actually hear what went on inside the temple. These tapes were extensively circulated and even played on radio stations.

Another member of the Mormon Church secretly recorded the temple ritual in the Provo temple and a good number of copies of this tape have also been circulated. Many others have published material or made films concerning the endowment ritual. Still others have given lectures about it. The cumulative effect of all the audio and video tapes, lectures, radio programs, films and printed copies of the ceremony being available to the general public has placed the Mormon leaders in a very awkward predicament. They had previously maintained that the temple ritual was so holy that God kept the knowledge of it from the world. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie declared:

So sacred and holy are the administrations performed that in every age when they have been revealed, the Lord has withheld them from the knowledge of the world and disclosed them only to the faithful saints in houses and places dedicated and selected for that purpose. (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 227)

To an outsider, it would almost appear that the Mormon leaders and the God they worship have lost all control over the dissemination of the ceremony. The contents of the ritual have been scattered to the ends of the world. Many non-Mormons now know far more about the endowments than the average Mormon. Only adults are permitted to go through the temple, and, according to the Church Section of the Mormon newspaper, *Deseret News*, January 16, 1982, “two-thirds of the adult members have yet to go through the temple for the first time, said Elder W. Grant Bangerter, executive director of the Temple Department . . .” The same issue of the church’s newspaper also noted that Bangerter said that “Through the history of the Church . . . only a fourth of the members have received endowments . . .” It is certainly ironic that a person can now easily obtain a non-Mormon publication such as *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* or *What’s Going On In There?* and find out more about the temple ceremony in a few minutes than most of the Mormons learn in a lifetime! Furthermore, the material available to the public seems to be proliferating as the Mormon Church grows larger.

Mormon leaders are not only faced with trying to explain the availability of a ceremony which they previously asserted was “withheld” from the “knowledge of the world,” but they also will find it very difficult to explain why God did not protect his sacred temple from those who brought in tape recorders to expose the ceremony. It has been a common belief among the Mormons that God’s hand protects the temple and its rituals. Ezra Taft Benson, who is currently the prophet of the church, stated: “I think the temple is the most sacred spot on earth . . . Temples are places of personal revelation” (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, pp. 250-251). One would think that if the spirit of the Lord flows freely in the temple, deceivers would be detected. In the Old Testament, II Chronicles 26:17-21, we read the story of a wicked king named Uzziah who “went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense.” He was warned that only the priests who were “consecrated to burn incense” were allowed to do so. When he persisted he was “smitten” by the Lord with “leprosy” and was “a leper unto the day of his death.”

Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie maintained that “the discerning of spirits is poured out upon presiding officials in God’s kingdom; they have it given to them to discern all gifts and all spirits, **lest any come among the saints and practice deception.** . . . There is no perfect operation of the power of discernment without revelation. Thereby even ‘the thoughts

and intents of the heart’ are made known.” Apostle Mathias F. Cowley told how the gift of discernment protected the temple:

On one of the three days during which the Dedicatory Services of the Logan Temple was held, President John Taylor . . . sighted a woman in the crowd whom he did not know but indicated her to President Card and said: “Don’t let that woman come into the assembly; she is not worthy.” . . . Brother Card said to President Taylor: “She couldn’t pass the door keeper without a recommend.” President Taylor replied, “That matters not; she is not worthy.” . . . Brother Card turned her back and later on he went to see her . . . she said there was a man in the ward who was not worthy of a recommend, but the Bishop gave him one . . . This woman happened to meet the man on the street and he asked her how she would like to go to the dedication . . . She said she would like to but could not get a recommend. He said: “I have a recommend and will give it to you for one dollar.” And so she got her recommend by paying this amount. (*Temples of the Most High*, p. 100)

One would think that if the temples were protected by God and the current Mormon officials were really led by revelation, those who used deception to obtain tape recordings to expose the endowment ceremony would have encountered judgment from God or at least been thwarted in their nefarious plans to discredit the church. The Sacketts, however, report the following:

The tape recording of the Mormon temple Endowment . . . was recorded in the Los Angeles Mormon Temple, and was made using a personal pocket-size tape recorder carried by one of the patrons . . . The patron . . . entered the temple using his own personal temple recommend . . . He was greeted by several temple worker acquaintances who obviously did not know of his excommunication from the Mormon Church, which had been at his own request several months earlier. One of the objectives of this foray was to test the well-known Mormon claim of divinely-assisted temple security. . . . Contrary to popular Mormon belief, not one person in the temple appeared the slightest bit spiritually or supernaturally alerted to the presence among them of one whom they classify as an “apostate” and a “son of perdition.” As he departed, the patron was encouraged by a member of the temple Presidency to return again soon. (*What’s Going On In There?* p. 4)

When we think of this incident with the tape recorder, we cannot help but remember a picture of Mark Hofmann, the man who forged Mormon documents, standing in the presence of the twelfth prophet of the church, Spencer W. Kimball, and four of the apostles. In this photograph, which we have reproduced in our book, *Tracking the White Salamander*, page 73, the prophet and the apostles appear to be carefully examining what purports to be the prophet Joseph Smith’s copy of characters found on the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. This document, of course, was a forgery, but the Mormon leaders were completely oblivious to that fact. Mr. Hofmann continued meeting with church leaders for about four years for the express purpose of deceiving them so that they would give him large amounts of money in exchange for his fraudulent documents. Church leaders, however, could not discern the wicked plan that Hofmann had in his heart. While the Mormon leaders claim to have the same powers as the ancient apostles in the Bible, their performance with regard to Mark Hofmann certainly does not match up to that of the Apostle Peter when he caught Ananias and Sapphira red-handed in their attempt to deceive the church with regard to a financial transaction: “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” (Acts 5:3).

From the time the endowment ritual was first revealed in Nauvoo, Mormon leaders have feared that the contents of the ceremony would become known. It now seems that all of

their efforts to stop the spread of knowledge concerning the endowment ceremony have been completely in vain.

NO MORE PENALTIES

We have already noted that the Mormon leaders have now removed the “most sacred” penalties which have been in the temple ceremony since the days of Joseph Smith. We feel that this is a real vindication of our work and of that of the many other ministries laboring with the Mormons.

We have always felt that these penalties were not compatible with Christian teachings and have strongly opposed them in print for over twenty years. We have continually expressed our belief that Joseph Smith borrowed the penalties from Masonry after he joined that secret organization. Although Masonry had been very unpopular since the late 1820’s, Smith was not ashamed of his association with the lodge in 1842. The following appears in Joseph Smith’s *History* under the date of March 15, 1842: “In the evening I received the first degree in Free Masonry in the Nauvoo Lodge . . .” (*History of the Church*, vol 4, p. 551). The entry for the following day contains this statement: “Wednesday, March 16.—I was with the Masonic Lodge and rose to the sublime degree” (p. 552).

The Masons had some very bloody oaths in their ritual. Capt. William Morgan, who had been a Mason for thirty years, exposed these oaths in a book printed in 1827. After publishing his book, *Freemasonry Exposed*, Morgan disappeared and this set off the great controversy over Masonry which was still raging when Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon. In any case, on pages 21-22 of his book, Morgan revealed the oath that Masons took in the “First Degree” of their ritual: “. . . I will . . . never reveal any part or parts, art or arts, point or points of the secret arts and mysteries of ancient Freemasonry . . . binding myself under no less penalty than to have my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by the roots . . .” On page 23, Morgan went on to show that the Masons who went through the first degree were also taught to draw “your right hand across your throat, the thumb next to your throat, your arm as high as the elbow in a horizontal position.”

In the past, Mormon leaders have argued against the charge by critics that changes have been made in the temple ceremony. Our examination of the evidence, however, reveals that their statements were not correct. Serious changes have been made in the ritual, and these changes have tended to obscure the fact that the penalties were derived from Masonry. For example, it is clear from many early sources that the promise given when one received “The First token of the Aaronic Priesthood” was derived from the oath given in the “First Degree” of the Masonic ritual. In *Temple Mormonism*, published in 1931, page 18, we find this information concerning the Mormon ritual:

The left arm is here placed at the square, palm to the front the right hand and arm raised to the neck, holding the palm downwards and thumb under the right ear.

Adam—“We, and each of us, covenant and promise that we will not reveal any of the secrets of this, the first token of the Aaronic priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign or penalty. Should we do so, we agree that our throats be cut from ear to ear and our tongues torn out by their roots.” . . .

Sign—In executing the sign of the penalty, the right hand palm down, is drawn sharply across the throat, then dropped from the square to the side.

The bloody nature of this oath in the temple endowment was verified by an abundance of testimony given in the *Reed*

Smoot Case. For example, in vol. 2, page 78, J. H. Wallis, Sr., testified: “. . . I agree that my throat be cut from ear to ear and my tongue torn out by its roots from my mouth.”

A very important letter has come to light which also confirms the gory wording of this oath in earlier times. It was written by the First Presidency of the Mormon Church (President Wilford Woodruff and his counselors George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith) to Lorenzo Snow, President of the Salt Lake Temple. Some months prior to the time the letter was written, President Woodruff recorded in his journal that he had met with George Q. Cannon, Joseph F. Smith, Lorenzo Snow and other church officials—including representatives who presided over four temples—and “spent three hours in harmonizing the Different M[ode?]s of Ceremonies in giving Endowments” (*Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, October 17, 1893, vol. 9, p. 267). The letter was written about ten months after the entry in Woodruff’s journal and contains this revealing information:

As a result of the conference of the brethren engaged as ordinance workers in the several Temples, held at Salt Lake Temple, some time ago, the following slight corrections have been adopted by us . . .

In the creation on the fifth day a grammatical error occurs. The word “their” is used instead of “its,” the word *their*, therefore, is changes [*sic*] to *its*. . . .

The words “that my tongue be torn from its roots in my mouth,” were substituted for “from the roof of my mouth.” (Letter from the First Presidency, August 31, 1894, LDS Historical Department, CR 100, 14, #2, Volume 8:16-17, typed copy)

Some time in the first half of the 20th century, a major change was made concerning the penalties in the endowment ceremony. The bloody wording of the oath mentioned above was entirely removed. Nevertheless, Mormons were still instructed to draw their thumbs across their throats to show the penalty. In the account of the ritual which we published in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 468, the reader can see how the wording was modified to remove the harsh language regarding the cutting of the throat and the tearing out of the tongue:

. . . we desire to impress upon your minds the sacred character of the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign and penalty, together with that of all the other Tokens of the Holy Priesthood, with their accompanying names, signs and penalties, . . . They are most sacred and are guarded by solemn covenants and obligations of secrecy to the effect that under no condition, even at the peril of your life, will you ever divulge them, except at a certain place that will be shown you hereafter. The representations of the penalties indicates different ways in which life may be taken. . . .

Adam, we give unto you the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood . . .

The sign of the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood is made by bringing the right arm to the square the palm of the hand to the front, the fingers close together and the thumb extended. This is the sign. The execution of the penalty is represented by placing the thumb under the left ear, the palm of the hand down, and by drawing the thumb quickly across the throat, to the right ear, and dropping the hand to the side. . . .

Now repeat in your minds after me the words of the covenant, at the same time representing the execution of the penalty.

I, _____ (think of the new name) do covenant and promise that I will never reveal the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, together with its accompanying name, sign and penalty. Rather than do so I would suffer my life to be taken.

This revised version, which remained in effect for a number of decades, seemed to be more confused than inspired. The Mormon leaders apparently desired to get rid of the most offensive wording but still wanted to retain the idea that there was a death penalty involved if the secrets were revealed. That the penalty for divulging the “First Token” was still the cutting of the throat would of course still be very clear to those who had taken the oath before it was changed, but those who received their endowments after the alteration of the ceremony must have found the whole thing somewhat confusing. While they were still instructed that the penalty was to draw “the thumb quickly across the throat” and that the penalties represented “ways in which life may be taken,” they did not have to agree that their “throats be cut from ear to ear and our tongues torn out by their roots.” All they had to do was promise not to “reveal the First Token . . . Rather than do so I would suffer my life to be taken.”

While some Mormons may not have realized exactly what they were doing when they took the penalties upon themselves, the more astute who paid careful attention to the ritual realized what they were doing and many of them were very offended. John Dart gives this information:

In pledging to never reveal the ritual, Mormons formerly made three motions—drawing one’s hand quickly across the throat, another indicating one’s heart would be cut out and the third suggesting disembowelment.

“That’s why I stopped going to the temple because [the ritual] was so offensive,” said a former woman member in Salt Lake City.

The so-called penalty gestures were criticized as “outgrowing their usefulness” in a talk before a Mormon audience about a month ago by Keith Norman . . . “I had no idea this change was about to take place,” Norman said after the modifications were introduced. (*Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 1990)

The recent removal of the penalties from the endowment ceremony by the Mormon leaders has been hailed by liberal Mormons as a step in the right direction. In his article, published in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 29, 1990, Vern Anderson told of Ross Peterson’s response to the removal of the penalties:

It [the endowment] also includes sacred covenants . . . Graphic depictions of penalties for breaking them, considered gruesome by some, were among the recent deletions. “It’s not as harsh,” Peterson said of the new version. “It’s more uplifting. It’s softer and gentler.”

In completely removing the penalties from the endowment ceremony, the Mormon leaders have taken out some important vestiges of Masonry which Joseph Smith had borrowed from the Masonic ritual.

The reader will remember that the article in the *Los Angeles Times* mentioned two other penalties that have been removed from the Mormon temple endowment. These were also derived from Masonry. In the “Second or Fellow Craft Degree,” Masons bound themselves

. . . under no less penalty than to have my left breast torn open and my heart and vitals taken from thence and thrown over my left shoulder and carried into the valley of Jehosaphat, there to become a prey to the wild beasts of the field, and vulture of the air . . . The sign is given by drawing your right hand flat, with the palm of it next to your breast, across your breast from the left to the right side with some quickness, and dropping it down by your side . . . (*Freemasonry Exposed*, pp. 52-53)

This oath and the penalty was incorporated into the temple endowment in the “Second Token of the Aaronic Priesthood.”

In the 1931 printing of *Temple Mormonism*, page 20, we find the following:

“We and each of us do covenant and promise that we will not reveal the secrets of this, the Second Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign, grip or penalty. Should we do so, we agree to have our breasts cut open and our hearts and vitals torn from our bodies and given to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field.” . . .

The Sign is made by placing the left arm on the square, placing the right hand across the chest with the thumb extended and then drawing it rapidly from left to right and dropping it to the side.

As in the case of the “First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood,” the offensive wording was deleted from the Mormon ceremony a number of decades ago (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* p. 470). The “execution of the penalty,” however, was still retained in the ritual until April, 1990.

In the “Third, or Master Mason’s Degree,” Masons bound themselves

. . . under no less penalty than to have my body severed in two in the midst, and divided to the north and south, my bowels burnt to ashes in the center . . . The Penal Sign is given by putting the right hand to the left side of the bowels, the hand open, with the thumb next to the belly, and drawing it across the belly, and letting it fall; this is done tolerably quick. This alludes to the penalty of the obligation: “Having my body severed in twain,” etc. (*Freemasonry Exposed*, pp. 75-77)

Joseph Smith included this Masonic oath in the “First Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood.” Mormons who went through the endowment were instructed to say that if they revealed “any of the secrets of this, the First Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood . . . we agree that our bodies be cut asunder in the midst and all our bowels gush out” (*Temple Mormonism*, p. 20). These offensive words were removed from the temple ceremony many years ago, but Mormons continued to execute the sign of the penalty until just recently:

The sign of the first token of the Melchizedek Priesthood or sign of the nail is made by bringing the left hand in front of you with the hand in cupping shape, the left arm forming a square, the right hand is also brought forward, the fingers close together, and the thumb is placed over the left hip. This is the sign. The execution of the penalty is represented by drawing the thumb quickly across the body and dropping the hand to the side. (*Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* p. 471)

Finally, in April 1990, this penalty was entirely removed from the temple ceremony.

As we have shown, Joseph Smith received the first three degrees of Masonry on March 15th and 16th of 1842. Less than two months later (May 4, 1842) he gave the endowment ceremonies (see *History of the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 1-2). The fact that the bloody oaths appeared in the temple ceremony in exactly the same order as in Masonry seems very suspicious. In both cases the first oath mentioned the slitting of the throat and tearing out of the tongue. The second spoke of the cutting open of the breast so that the heart and vitals could be removed, and the third mentioned disembowelment. Moreover, in all three cases the same penalties were demonstrated. This all appears to be too similar to be a coincidence.

Since many of those who took part in the endowment ceremonies were already Masons, Joseph Smith had some explaining to do. He, therefore, maintained that he was restoring the original temple rites which had been lost from the earth.

Smith further explained that Masonry, which claimed to go back to King Solomon's temple, originally had the same ritual but that it had become corrupted. Heber C. Kimball, who later became a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, could not help but see the resemblance between the two ceremonies. In the book, *Heber C. Kimball*, page 85, Stanley B. Kimball gives this valuable information:

Heber thought he saw similarities between Masonic and Mormon ritual. In a letter to Parley Pratt, June 17, 1842, Heber revealed: "We have received some pressious things through the Prophet . . . there is a similarity of preas[t] Hood in Masonry. Bro. Joseph Ses [says?] Masonry was taken from preasthood but has become degenerated. But menny things are perfect." Later at a special conference . . . Heber explained further: "We have the true Masonry. The Masonry of today is received from the apostasy which took place in the days of Solomon and David. They have now and then a thing that is correct, but we have the real thing."

Mormon apologist E. Cecil McGavin wrote:

If we manifested the belligerent spirit that many of the Masons display, we might say that Masonry is a spurious system descending from Solomon's Temple. Numerous changes and corruptions have crept in, yet enough of the original remains to bear a few humble resemblances to the true endowment. . . . In the diary of Benjamin F. Johnson, an intimate friend and associate of Joseph Smith, it is recorded that "Joseph told me that Freemasonry was the apostate endowment, as sectarian religion was the apostate religion." (*Mormonism and Masonry*, 1947, p. 199)

Dr. Reed C. Durham, a Mormon historian who has served as president of the Mormon History Association, was forced by the evidence to admit that Masonry had a powerful influence on Joseph Smith:

. . . I am convinced that in the study of Masonry lies a pivotal key to further understanding Joseph Smith and the Church. . . . The many parallels found between early Mormonism and the Masonry of that day are substantial . . . I believe that there are few significant developments in the Church, that occurred after March 15, 1842 [the day Smith became a Mason], which did not have some Masonic interdependence. . . . There is absolutely no question in my mind that the Mormon ceremony which came to be known as the Endowment, introduced by Joseph Smith to Mormon Masons, had an immediate inspiration from Masonry. This is not to suggest that no other source of inspiration could have been involved, but the similarities between the two ceremonies are so apparent and overwhelming that some dependent relationship cannot be denied. They are so similar, in fact, that one writer was led to refer to the Endowment as Celestial Masonry. (*Mormon Miscellaneous*, October 1975, pp. 13-14)

Some Mormon apologists who are aware of the devastating parallels between Masonry and the Mormon temple endowment believe that when Joseph Smith went through the Masonic ritual, God gave him the spirit of revelation so that he would discern which portions really went back to Solomon's temple and which parts had been corrupted by later Masons. The prophet, therefore, only incorporated the genuine God-given elements into the Mormon "endowment ceremony."

Now that the Mormon leaders have completely removed both the gruesome wording and the penalties from the temple ritual, it places these apologists on the horns of a dilemma. If God really instructed Joseph Smith to lift the bloody oaths and penalties from the Masonic ritual and insert them into the endowment ceremony, how can the present leaders of the church, who are supposed to be guided by revelation, tear them

out of the temple ritual without offending God? It would appear that either the present leaders of the church feel that they know more than the God who was supposed to have spoken to Joseph Smith, or else they realize that Smith made a serious mistake when he borrowed this embarrassing material from the Masons.

The action of church authorities in dropping out some of the elements which were once believed to be "most sacred" will undoubtedly raise some serious questions in the minds of many faithful LDS people. If Joseph Smith was in error when he included these things, then it is obvious that we have no assurance that the other material he took from the Masons is really inspired. If a portion of the Masonic material he plagiarized is found to be defective, it throws suspicion on all the rest of the Masonic ritual which was incorporated into the endowment, and since there is so much Masonry in the ceremony, it would lead one to the suspicion that the entire ceremony is man-made. In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 484-492, we presented devastating evidence linking the Mormon temple ceremony to Masonry. The parallels are too close to be swept aside. This same information will be included in our new book, *Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, 1842-1990*.

Those who maintain that the recent changes were really made because of revelation given to church authorities, should consider another interesting aspect with regard to this question. On February 18, 1987, the church's own newspaper, *Deseret News*, reported that British Freemasons removed the bloody oaths from their own ceremonies: "Beheading and ripping out the tongue have been abolished by the British Freemasons as penalties for violating the solemn code of the secret society, it was reported. Such punishments have been on the books of Freemasonry for centuries to enforce solemn obligations that inductees to Masonic lodges swear on the Bible to uphold. But, the *Daily Telegraph* said this week, it's the sort of thing that scares people away from the secret society."

Now, if British Freemasons realized that their gruesome oaths had a tendency to scare "people away from their secret society" and decided to make a change to accommodate themselves to current thinking, it seems very likely that the leaders of the Mormon Church could also see "the handwriting on the wall." If this process is termed "revelation," then it is obvious that the British Freemasons had the revelation first.

IMPORTANT OMISSION

The *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 1990, gave this information concerning the removal of the "Five Points of Fellowship" from the temple ceremony:

Also dropped is an "embrace" of a man representing God, who stands behind a ceiling-to-floor veil. Reaching through a slit in the veil, the church member puts his or her hand to the back of the deity and presses against him at the cheek, shoulders, knees and feet with the veil between them. The contact at "five points of fellowship," including the hand to his back, has been omitted, although the member must still give a secret handshake and repeat a lengthy password.

There can be no question that the "five points of fellowship" were derived from Masonry. The reader can clearly see this from the comparison which follows:

MASONS: — He (the candidate) is raised on what is called the **five points of fellowship** . . . This is done by putting the **inside of your right foot to the inside of the right foot of the person** to whom you are going to give the word, **the inside of your knee to his, laying your right breast against his, your left hands on the back of each other, and your mouths**

to each other's right ear (in which position alone you are permitted to give the word), and **whisper** the word Mahhah-bone . . . He is also told that Mahhah-bone signifies **marrow in the bone**. (*Freemasonry Exposed*, pp. 84-85)

MORMONS: — The **five points of fellowship** are given by putting **the inside of the right foot to the inside of the Lord's, the inside of your knee to his, laying your breast close to his, your left hands on each other's backs, and each one putting his mouth to the other's ear, in which position the Lord whispers:**

Lord—This is the sign of the token:

“Health to the navel, **marrow in the bones** . . .” (*Temple Mormonism*, page 22)

That the “five points of fellowship” were in the temple ceremony while the Mormons were still in Nauvoo, Illinois, is verified by a reference H. Michael Marquardt pointed out in *Heber C. Kimball's Journal*, Nov. 21, 1845 to Jan. 7, 1846. Under the date of Dec. 11, 1845, a scribe wrote of the “second token of the Melchizedek Priesthood and also the key word on the five points of fellowship.”

The Five Points of Fellowship remained a very important part of the temple ceremony until the ritual was revised in April 1990. In the ceremony as we published it in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 472-473, the reader will find that when those receiving their endowments arrive at the “veil” and seek entrance into heaven, they are lacking one extremely important key—i.e. the name of the Second Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood, The Patriarchal Grip or Sure Sign of the Nail. When the Lord asks the recipient to “give it [the name] to me?” the response is: “I cannot. I have not yet received it. For this purpose I have come to converse with the Lord through the veil.” The Lord then responds: “You shall receive it upon the five points of fellowship, through the veil.” The Lord gives the vital information and then asks for the name again: “Will you give it to me?” This time the recipient says, “I will, upon the five points of fellowship through the veil . . .” After the secret words are given, the Lord says “That is correct.” Shortly after this, the recipient is allowed to enter into the presence of the Lord in the “Celestial Room.”

In *Duncan's Masonic Ritual and Monitor*, page 120, we read that in Masonry the candidate can only receive “the grand Masonic word on the five points of fellowship.” The reader will remember that Heber C. Kimball's journal for 1845 made it clear that in the Mormon endowment this important key to the Celestial Kingdom was only given “on the five points of fellowship.” We have also shown that up until the revision of the ceremony in April 1990, the Lord would only give this important information “upon the five points of fellowship, through the veil.” Furthermore, the recipient had to give it back to the Lord “upon the five points of fellowship, through the veil.” For almost a century and a half, therefore, the Mormon leaders taught that these secret words could only be whispered in the ear while the Lord and the recipient were touching on all “five points of fellowship.” From what we can learn, those who participate in the ritual still put their “left hands on each other's backs and whisper the words of the sign,” but they do not put their feet and knees together and all the wording concerning the “five points of fellowship” has been completely deleted. These words previously appeared in four different places—the “Lord” spoke of the “five points of fellowship” twice; “Peter” referred to the “five points of fellowship” once, and the recipient mentioned them once.

While it is good that the Mormon leaders removed this Masonic element from the endowment ceremony, some people who have been involved in temple work feel that the reason it was dropped was because some of the women felt the five

points of contact (especially the placing of the “inside of your knee to his”) were too intimate. There were complaints that the men playing the role of the Lord sometimes took advantage of the situation. We were also told that even some of the men felt they had a problem with the “Lord” behind the veil. Since a large number of men have played the role of the Lord in the various temples throughout the world, it is certainly possible that complaints could have been made at various times. The performance of this type of ceremony in any group of people would probably result in some complaints. In any case, it is very possible that the “five points of fellowship” were removed because this part of the ritual seemed awkward or embarrassing to some members of the Mormon Church.

Regardless of the reason for the change, it raises serious questions concerning the inspiration of church officials. If a person was previously compelled to receive the secret information necessary to enter heaven on the five points of fellowship, how can the church leaders now by-pass God's revealed way which was given by the prophet Joseph Smith. Kim Sue Lia Perkes revealed that:

. . . a former Mormon familiar with the changes said the ceremony's climax has been eliminated. Removal of that part of the ritual, he said, is the **equivalent of taking the Eucharist out of the Roman Catholic Mass**.

Not all Mormons are happy with the ceremony changes.

“I certainly have Mormon friends who will see it as a step toward apostasy and an accommodation to the world,” said one practicing Mormon in Utah. (*Arizona Republic*, April 28, 1990)

DEVIL'S MINISTER GONE

When we first printed the temple ceremony in 1969, we commented on the fact that in the 1906 printing of the endowment, the Devil offered a preacher four thousand dollars a year to work for him. We said that in 1906 this was a great deal of money, but that the Mormons had neglected to give the preacher much of a raise. Therefore, when we printed the ceremony in 1969, and subsequently in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 468, the preacher was still only receiving five thousand dollars a year. In any case, this portion of the ceremony makes it perfectly clear that in the eyes of the Mormon leaders the orthodox Christian religion is the Devil's religion:

LUCIFER:—Well, if you'll preach your orthodox religion to this people and convert them, I'll give you—let me see—five thousand a year.

In *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, page 66, we wrote:

. . . the temple ritual tries to link Christians and ministers of other churches to the Devil's work. We feel that this is one of the most objectionable things about the ceremony, and we do not feel that a Christian would want to give any support to this type of thing.

Many other Christians protested against this part of the ceremony, and a great deal of pressure has been put on the Mormon leaders to change this part of the endowment. We understand, in fact, that a petition signed by thousands of people demanded that this portion of the endowment be changed.

After this portion of the ceremony was deleted, Vern Anderson wrote the following: “Among the changes . . . a portion of the ceremony with an actor portraying a non-Mormon ‘preacher’ paid by Satan to spread false doctrine has been

eliminated. 'The general consensus is that it's a breath of fresh air,' said Ross Peterson . . . 'You don't put down other churches, or imply that they are Satan's children'" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 29, 1990). We have been told that all the material making fun of both Protestants and Catholics has now been eliminated. The ceremony as it was previously given, not only implied that Protestant ministers were working for the Devil, but also had Lucifer claiming he would buy up "Popes" to help him in his evil work.

Unfortunately, the removal of the portion of the temple ceremony which implies that Christian ministers are working for the Devil does not really solve the problem. The Mormon Church still retains Joseph Smith's story of the First Vision in the *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History, verses 18-19. In this account, Joseph Smith asserted that Jesus himself told him that all other churches were wrong:

My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right . . . I was answered that I must **join none of them**, for they were **all wrong**; and the Personage who addressed me said that all **their creeds were an abomination in his sight**; that those professors were **all corrupt** . . .

OTHER CHANGES

In the version of the temple ceremony which we published in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 467, the men "covenant and promise" that they will "obey the law of God." The women, however, agree to obey the law of their husbands:

ELOHIM:—We will now put the sisters under covenant to obey the law of their husbands. Sisters, arise, raise your right hand to the square. Each of you do covenant and promise that you will obey the law of your husband and abide by his council in righteousness. Each of you bow your head and say yes.

SISTERS: — Yes.

We have already shown that since the church leaders revised the endowment ceremony on April 10, 1990, there has been some kind of a change in the covenant women are required to make. It has been stated that they "no longer must vow to obey their husbands" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 29, 1990). While we do not know the wording of the new version, it appears that some of the women are pleased with the changes in the ritual. In the *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 1990, we find this:

Lavina Fielding Anderson . . . said she received the revisions "with joy." "I anticipate further changes with hope and faith," she said . . . "Some portions of the temple ceremony have been painful to some Mormon women and, in some respects, still are," she added, without identifying what elements may still be objectionable. Women, for example, still cover their faces with veils at certain points in the ritual, sources said.

Another important change seems to have been made in the sign for the Second Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood. In the ceremony, as printed in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 471, we find this:

The sign is made by raising both hands high above the head and by lowering your hands to the side, saying:

Pay lay ale

Pay lay ale

Pay lay ale

As early as 1969 we pointed out a problem with this:

. . . there seems to have been a change made in this part of the ceremony, for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 12, 1906, gave

the words as "Pale, Ale, Ale," and *Temple Mormonism* used the words "Pale, Hale, Hale." (*The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 1, p. 138)

However this may be, in another portion of the ceremony (*Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* p. 468), it is explained that "Pay lay ale" means "O God, hear the words of my mouth!" In the early 1980's some critics of the church began to proclaim that in Hebrew these words really mean, "Wonderful Lucifer." If this were true, this would mean that the Mormons were praying to the Devil in this part of the ceremony. We took very strong exception to this claim and pointed out that there is no way that these words can be translated "Wonderful Lucifer." We still stand by this research which we presented in detail in our book, *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*, pages 11-15, 85-86.

In any case, many Mormons must have been bothered when they had to raise and lower their hands repeating the strange words "Pay lay ale" three times during the ritual. According to what we can learn, the Mormon leaders have now replaced the mysterious words with the English words which were mentioned earlier in the ceremony: "O God, hear the words of my mouth!" The fact that four different versions of the sign of the Second Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood have been given over the years certainly raises a question concerning the claim that the endowment was revealed by revelation.

We have been informed by two different sources that the Lecture Before The Veil has been removed. This lecture was previously given to all those who were going through the ritual for the first time. It was not deemed necessary, however, for those who were going through the endowment ceremony for the dead. The words "penalty" or "penalties" were used six times in this lecture, and it referred to the "sectarian minister" who preached false doctrine (i.e., the minister who was employed by Lucifer).

There probably were many other changes made in the temple ceremony which have not been reported yet. There have been different reports regarding how much material was actually removed from the ceremony or changed in some way. The *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 29, 1990, referred to the rituals "current length of about 90 minutes." One man noted that just after the changes were made, temple workers were having a very difficult time with the new wording and felt that when they become proficient in the use of the new script, the ceremony might be somewhat shorter than when he went through.

REVELATION OR ACCOMODATION?

Although the Mormon leaders have been extremely quiet about the changes in the temple ceremony, John Dart reported that the following appeared in a statement by church leaders:

"We are a church that believes in modern and continuous revelation, and the changes that were recently made in our temple ceremony are reflective of that process . . ." (*Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 1990)

An increasing number of Mormons are beginning to believe that what is called "revelation" by church leaders is not really revelation from God, but rather "accomodation" to the views of the world. A number of things which have happened since 1890 lead to that conclusion. The changes concerning polygamy, the blacks and the temple endowment all point in this direction. The process of "modern and continuous revelation" could probably be summed up in the following formula: Criticism of a specific doctrine or practice from without the church + acceptance of that criticism by Mormon scholars and prominent people = "Revelation."

Take, for example, the practice of polygamy. Joseph Smith claimed to receive a revelation from God on July 12,

1843, stating that plural marriage was to be practiced by the Mormon Church. This revelation is still published in the church's *Doctrine and Covenants* as Section 132. Interestingly, this system of marriage was an extremely important part of the sealing ceremonies which are still performed in the temple for "time and all eternity." For many years the Mormon leaders taught that temple marriage and plural marriage stand or fall together. Apostle Orson Pratt, for instance, emphasized that:

... if plurality of marriage is not true, or in other words, if a man has no divine right to marry two wives or more in this world, then marriage for eternity is not true, and your faith is all vain, and all the sealing ordinanc[e]s and powers, pertaining to marriages for eternity are vain, worthless, good for nothing; for as sure as one is true the other also must be true. Amen. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 21, p. 296)

Non-Mormons, of course, vigorously opposed the practice of polygamy. In addition, the United States Government prosecuted Mormons who were engaged in the practice. On Jan. 16, 1886, Lorenzo Snow, who later became the fifth prophet of the Mormon Church, was sentenced to six months in prison. When the prosecuting attorney predicted that if Apostle Snow was convicted, "a new revelation would soon follow, changing the divine law of celestial marriage," Lorenzo Snow emphatically replied: "The severest prosecutions have never been followed by revelations changing a divine law, obedience to which brought imprisonment or martyrdom. Though I go to prison, God will not change his law of celestial marriage" (*Historical Record*, 1887, vol. 6, p. 144).

Things went from bad to worse for the Mormon leaders. Pressure not only increased from the outside, but members of the church were swayed by the opposition. John Taylor, who was the third prophet of the church, strongly denounced those who would give up the practice:

God has given us a revelation in regard to celestial marriage. . . . they would like us to tone that principle down and change it and make it applicable to the views of the day. This we cannot do . . . I cannot do it, and will not do it. I find some men try to twist round the principle in any way and every way they can. They want to sneak out of it in some way. Now God don't want any kind of sycophancy like that. . . . If God has introduced something for our glory and exaltation, we are not going to have that kicked over by any improper influence, either inside or outside of the Church of the living God. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 25, pp. 309-310)

Apostle Orson Pratt argued:

God has told us Latter-day Saints that we shall be condemned if we do not enter into that principle; and yet I have heard now and then . . . a brother or a sister say, "I am a Latter-day Saint, but I do not believe in polygamy." Oh, what an absurd expression! . . . If the doctrine of polygamy, as revealed to the Latter-day Saints, is not true, I would not give a fig for all your other revelations that came through Joseph Smith the Prophet; I would renounce the whole of them. . . . The Lord has said, that those who reject this principle reject their salvation, they shall be damned, saith the Lord . . . I want to prophecy that all men and women who oppose the revelation which God has given in relation to polygamy will find themselves in darkness . . . they will finally go down to hell and be damned if they do not repent. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 17, pp. 224-225)

Notwithstanding all of the strong rhetoric used by Mormon leaders, in 1890, Wilford Woodruff, the fourth prophet of the church, suspended the practice of polygamy when he issued the Manifesto (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Official Declaration 1). President Woodruff proclaimed that the Manifesto was given by revelation from God:

... the Lord . . . is giving us revelation . . . The Lord showed me by vision and revelation exactly what would take place if we did not stop this practice. If we had not stopped it . . . all ordinances would be stopped . . . and many men would be made prisoners. . . . the God of Heaven commanded me to do what I did do . . . I went before the Lord, and I wrote what the Lord told me to write. . . . (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 3 volumes in 1, pp. 105-106)

It is obvious from the evidence we present in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 231-234, that President Woodruff yielded to pressures from both non-Mormons and members of his own church and issued the Manifesto which eventually ended the practice of plural marriage within the church.

Prior to June 9, 1978, the Mormon Church had a doctrine which was referred to by outsiders as the "anti-black doctrine" because blacks were forbidden the priesthood. The basis for this doctrine was Joseph Smith's Book of Abraham (published in the *Pearl of Great Price*, one of the four standard works of the church). Joseph Smith wrote that "from Ham, sprang that race which preserved the curse in the land." Blacks were identified as descendants of Ham and were "cursed . . . as pertaining to the Priesthood" (*Pearl of Great Price*, Book of Abraham, 1:21-26). It was taught that even "one drop of Negro blood" would prevent a person from holding the priesthood, marrying for eternity in the temple, or even going through the endowment ceremony (see *Race Problems—As They Affect the Church*, by Mark E. Petersen, August 27, 1954). Bruce R. McConkie, who later became an apostle, bluntly stated:

Negroes in this life are denied the priesthood; under no circumstances can they hold this delegation of authority from the Almighty. The gospel message of salvation is not carried affirmatively to them . . . Negroes are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned . . . (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1958, p. 477)

There was a great deal of discussion regarding civil rights in the 1950's. In 1959 we printed our first criticism of the Mormon doctrine concerning blacks. As early as 1963, we believed that it was likely that the Mormon leaders would have a new "revelation" regarding blacks and printed a sheet entitled, "Will There Be a Revelation Regarding the Negro?" At the bottom of this sheet we predicted: "If the pressure continues to increase on the Negro question, the leaders of the Mormon Church will probably have another revelation which will allow the Negro to hold the priesthood." Over the years we continued to print a great deal of material on the subject of blacks and the priesthood. Although there were some Mormons who had doubts about the anti-black doctrine, at that time very few were willing to publicly criticize the church. We were ridiculed for the stand which we took, but we persisted in challenging this doctrine and a number of Mormons began to take our work seriously.

Pressure for a change in the doctrine concerning blacks continued to mount both without and within the church. Finally, on June 9, 1978, the Mormon church's *Deseret News* carried a startling announcement by the First Presidency which said that a new revelation had been given and that blacks would be allowed to hold the priesthood: ". . . we have pleaded long and earnestly . . . supplicating the Lord for divine guidance. He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come . . . all worthy male members of the church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color." Shortly after this revelation was received, it became clear that the church's ban on marriage to blacks had been lifted. On June 24, 1978, the church's newspaper announced that "the first black man to gain the priesthood" was allowed to go through the temple endowment and was sealed to his wife for time and eternity.

Like the polygamy revelation, the revelation by President Spencer W. Kimball granting blacks the priesthood was given only after tremendous pressure was exerted by non-Mormon critics and members of the church itself.

With regard to the recent revision of the temple ceremony, it is clear that the “revelation” came in the same way as the changes on polygamy and the black doctrine. In the Introduction to our 1964 reprint of *Temple Mormonism*, we pointed out that “there have been quite a number of changes made since the Temple ceremony was first introduced.” We went on to predict that there would “probably be other changes made in the Temple ceremony as time goes on.”

As we have already shown, after printing *Temple Mormonism* in 1964, we published an updated version of the endowment ceremony in 1969 in *The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 1. This same version was printed in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* in 1972 and is still found in that book. In addition, in our book, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, published by Moody Press in 1980, we included portions of the endowment ceremony. We have mentioned also that Chuck and Dolly Sackett published the ceremony in a pamphlet and distributed tapes of the actual ceremony. Others also disseminated the ceremony or portions of it in books, pamphlets, tracts, films and tapes.

Although the Mormon Church completely lost control of the situation and had no way to stop the tens of thousands of copies of the endowment which were being distributed throughout the world, most members of the church who felt there was something wrong with the ritual did not dare to openly protest. They feared that they would be strongly reprimanded or even excommunicated if they raised their voices on the issue. In 1987, however, a remarkably frank article by David John Buerger was printed in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, a liberal Mormon publication which is not controlled by the church. In this article, Buerger acknowledged that there were “strong indications that Joseph Smith drew on the Masonic rites in shaping the temple endowment, and specifically borrowed the tokens, signs, and penalties” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Winter 1987, p. 45).

Mr. Buerger went even further by suggesting that church leaders needed to seriously consider making changes in the ceremony to counter declining rates of attendance at endowment ceremonies:

The number of operating temples has increased dramatically . . . An analysis of ordinance data, however, suggests that rates of temple work have remained relatively constant over the last fifteen years. . . . Members of my own stake made 2,671 visits to the Oakland Temple in 1985, versus 3,340 visits in 1984—a 20 percent drop in activity. . . . Without comparing the policies of stakes in other temple districts, it is impossible to say how characteristic my stake might be.

These declining rates suggest that many Latter-day Saints apparently do not participate extensively in either vicarious or living endowments. The need for reevaluation can at least be discussed. As the history of the endowment shows, specific content and procedural alterations were made in 1845, 1877, 1883, 1893, 1919-27, the early 1960s, and 1968-72. . . .

The feelings contemporary Saints have for the temple certainly merit a careful quantitative analysis by professional social scientists. I have heard a number of themes from people who feel discomfort in one degree or another with elements of the temple ceremony. . . . Probably in no other settings except college organizations, with their attendant associations of youthfulness and possibly immaturity, do most Mormons

encounter “secret” ceremonies with code handshakes, clothing that has particular significance, and, perhaps most disturbing to some, the implied violence of the penalties. Various individuals have commented on their difficulty in seeing these elements as “religious” or “inspirational,” originating in the desires of a loving Father for his children. . . . some are also uncomfortable at the portrayal of a Christian minister as the hireling of Satan . . .

Sixth, the endowment ceremony still depicts women as subservient to men, not as equals in relating to God. For example, women covenant to obey their husbands in righteousness, while he is the one who acts as intermediary to God. . . . Some find the temple irrelevant to the deeper currents of their Christian service and worship of God. Some admit to boredom. Others describe their motivations for continued and regular temple attendance as feelings of hope and patience—the faith that by continuing to participate they will develop more positive feelings. . . . Often they feel unworthy or guilty because of these feelings since the temple is so unanimously presented as the pinnacle of spiritual experience for sincere Latter-day Saints. . . . The endowment has changed a great deal in response to community needs over time. Obviously it has the capability of changing still further if the need arises. . . . From a strictly functional perspective, the amount of time required to complete a vicarious endowment seems excessive. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Winter 1987, pp. 63, 66-69)

The reader will notice that David John Buerger felt there should be a “careful quantitative analysis by professional social scientists” to find out why attendance at temples has been declining. Although it could have been just a coincidence, it is interesting to note that within months of the publication of Buerger’s article, the Mormon Church made its own survey of the opinions of members concerning temple work. In the Instructions for the *Survey of Adult Members in the United States and Canada*, the following appears: “. . . we have developed this survey to help us understand your thoughts, feelings, and experiences relating to temple and genealogy activities. . . . along with you, approximately 3,400 other members in the United States and Canada are being asked to participate in this project. . . . We hope that you will feel you can be candid and open in your answers. . . . what you write will be anonymous. We will not be able to associate your name with the questionnaire you complete.” This survey was to be returned in the mail “by MARCH 30th,” 1988.

Although Question 28 asked the person who had been through the endowment ritual if he or she “felt spiritually uplifted by the experience,” it also probed to find out if the “experience was unpleasant” or if the person “was confused by what happened. Q. 29 is worded, “Briefly describe how you felt after receiving your own endowment.” On the photocopy we have in our possession, the respondent has written: “Wierd [sic].” Q. 37-k inquired as to whether the person found “it hard to go to the temple.” Q. 39-b asked if the individual fell “asleep during sessions.” Questions were also asked concerning whether the person really believed “The president of the LDS Church is a prophet of God,” or if “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true church on the earth” (Q. 70a-b). There was also a question with regard to whether there were any “doubts about specific LDS doctrines and teachings” (Q. 77-g). A page at the end of the *Survey* was left blank in case the person had “any additional things to write about your feelings or activities in temple or genealogical work . . .”

Although our photocopy of the page containing the “Comments” is faded out and difficult to read, it appears that

the woman who filled out the *Survey* admitted she had lost faith in the church. This is supported by her answers to Questions 77 and 78. The “main reason for not attending LDS church services” was listed as: “I have some doubts about specific LDS doctrines and teachings.” From all appearances it appears that the Mormon Church’s *Survey* was a feeler to find out what changes should be made in the ceremony and how they would be received by members of the church.

While many Mormons will undoubtedly stand firm in their faith that the decision to change the ceremonies came by direct revelation from God, the evidence seems to indicate that the publication of the temple ceremony and objections to it by non-Mormons combined with criticism from within the church (as evidenced by David John Buerger’s article in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*) forced the Mormon leaders to issue a survey to find out why temple attendance had fallen off and what members of the church actually felt about the endowment ceremony. The results of that survey must have indicated that a significant number of people were offended by parts of the ceremony. Consequently, a new “revelation” was given to make the ritual more appealing to the Mormon people. This tends to verify the formula that the criticism of a specific doctrine or practice from without the church + acceptance of that criticism by Mormon scholars and prominent people = “Revelation.”

In the early days of the Mormon Church, the word “revelation” had a very different meaning than it does today. Joseph Smith often used the word to refer to some new doctrine or teaching which he claimed God himself had revealed to him. Some of his “revelations” were extremely unpopular, but this usually did not bother him very much. Take, for instance, his “revelation” concerning polygamy. In spite of the fact that many members of the church were violently opposed to the doctrine, he continued to secretly advocate the practice and to take plural wives himself. Unlike the current leaders of the church, he did not feel that it was necessary to take a survey and modify the doctrine to fit the opinions of others. While we do not believe that the “revelation” on polygamy came from God and are very opposed to the practice, we must admit that Smith was not easily swayed by public opinion.

While Joseph Smith used the word “revelation” to refer to controversial new doctrines he brought forth to the church, later prophets have used the same word in an attempt to destroy the very teachings which Joseph Smith claimed were divinely inspired. When President Wilford Woodruff claimed he had a “revelation” to stop the practice of plural marriage in the church, he was not adding any new doctrine. Instead, he was throwing overboard a doctrine Smith taught was essential for salvation. If the information that polygamy should not be practiced was a “revelation,” then Christians actually received it first. Long before Mormonism began, they were condemning the practice.

Some people now point to the “revelation” which Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth prophet of the church, gave concerning the blacks as evidence that the church is still led by revelation. Nothing could be further from the truth. President Kimball did not reveal any new truth to the world. Instead, he destroyed a doctrine that came from Joseph Smith’s own “Book of Abraham”—a doctrine which the prophets of the church had stubbornly clung to until pressure from within and without the church was so strong that he was forced to yield on the issue. Millions of Christians and even a large number of Mormons had received this “revelation” many years before President Kimball received his answer.

As far as we know, the recent “revelation” that the temple ceremony should be altered has not produced any new or important material. Instead, it is a mutilation of what was

supposed to have been revealed by “revelation” to the prophet Joseph Smith. Things that were formerly considered to be “most sacred” were stripped from the ritual. For many years Christians have spoken against the very things which have now been removed. Why did it take so long for Mormon leaders to obtain their “revelation” on the subject? The liberal Mormon David John Buerger seems to have had the “revelation” some time before church leaders changed the ceremony.

It seems that it is very difficult for most faithful Mormons to grasp the significance of what is really going on within the church. The implications are just too devastating for them to face. The following hypothetical illustration may help the Mormon reader put the matter into perspective: If we were to say that God had given us a “revelation” that baptism should no longer be practiced, members of the church would protest that this could not be a true revelation. They would undoubtedly claim that we were merely feigning a “revelation” as a pretext to remove an important ordinance from the teachings of Christ and might even suggest that we were embarrassed about getting wet in front of a crowd.

To those who are paying close attention, it is obvious that the word “revelation” is really being used as a cover-up for what is going on. Church leaders are really destroying the original teachings of Joseph Smith in a very sneaky way. Each time they remove some part that Smith considered vital, they clothe the action by saying it is a new “revelation” from God. When will the people wake up and realize what is going on? We, of course, agree that Joseph Smith’s teachings are filled with errors. We feel, in fact, that sweeping changes need to be made, but we do not believe it is being honest to do it under the guise of “revelation.” Instead, the General Authorities of the church should openly admit that they feel Joseph Smith departed from Christian teachings and then propose a plan to effect the changes that need to be made. It seems obvious, however, that they will not do this because they know they will lose power with the people. It is much easier to say that the prophet has had a new “revelation” and that, of course, marks “the end of controversy.” O. Kendall White has pointed out that the Mormon leaders’ claim of “continuing revelation” is really a mechanism which they use to side-step acknowledging the “errors of the past.” This, of course, leads to the impression that “the church is never wrong.”

Although they would never admit it, it would appear from the changes they made in the temple endowment ritual that the current leaders of the church realize that portions of the ceremony were not from God—at least we assume that they never would have changed these parts if they truly believed they came from God. They must agree, therefore, that we were correct in our assertion that the penalties which they themselves removed from the ceremony were really derived from Masonry. It is certainly sad that with all the evidence they have in their possession that the endowment ritual is man-made, they still choose to remain silent.

A BAD EXPERIENCE?

Many people who have been through the Mormon temple endowment later admit that they were shocked by the ceremony because it was so different from anything they had previously encountered in Mormonism. A prominent Mormon educator who served at Brigham Young University told us that when his wife first went to the temple to receive her endowments, she became so upset with the ritual that she refused to go any further and the entire session was delayed while temple workers tried to convince her to go on. Over the years a surprising number of people have told us that they had a very bad experience when

they went through the temple ritual. Many of them said that their first serious doubts concerning the authenticity of Mormonism arose when they went through the endowment ceremony. Couples have told us that they both had very negative feelings during the ceremony but at the time did not dare confide these doubts with each other. We recently received a letter in which the following appears:

We converted to Mormonism 16 years ago when two delightful young missionaries knocked on our door. . . . I had been raised in a Christian household . . . We subsequently married in the Temple in New Zealand; an experience we found to be very confusing and frightening and we both wanted to leave, but did not mention this to each other . . . I became a Christian in October last year and my husband followed shortly after. . . . We feel so full of the spirit of God and we love Jesus with all our hearts. (Letter from Australia, dated January 11, 1990)

Many people who enter the temple are puzzled as to why they should have to wear specially marked garments for the rest of their lives and learn secret passwords, signs and handshakes to enter into the presence of God. They feel that this is rather childish. As we have shown, David John Buerger has pointed out that these types of things are found in secret lodges and also in "college organizations, with their attendant associations of youthfulness and possibly immaturity." The endowment ceremony actually gives the impression that God is like a youngster who only allows those who know the secret passwords and signs into his heavenly clubhouse. This is entirely different from anything we find in the New Testament. In John 10:14, 27-28, the following appears: "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. . . . My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Those who really know Christ do not have to worry about remembering any secret words or handshakes. As the Apostle Paul expresses it, those who are alive at his coming will be "caught up together with them [i.e., those who are raised from the dead] in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:17). This hardly allows any time for questions and answers and a ceremony of passing through the veil. In I Corinthians 15:51-52, Paul wrote that "we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump . . ." Apostle John added this comforting thought: ". . . when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2). While the temple ritual leads Mormons to believe that God is going to put them through the type of test a Mason has to go through to get into the lodge, Christians believe that at death they will be received immediately into God's presence. We find great encouragement in this promise. We feel that God is like the father of the prodigal son; he did not make his son pass through some type of test upon his return home. Instead, he "ran" out to meet him, and "fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20).

As we have already stated, Mormonism teaches that only Mormons who receive their endowments and are married for eternity can obtain the highest exaltation in the hereafter. While the Bible clearly proclaims that "whosoever believeth in him [Jesus] should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:15), Mormon leaders have taught that "eternal life" only comes through temple marriage. For example, President Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth prophet of the church, emphasized: "Only

through celestial marriage can one find the strait way, the narrow path. Eternal life cannot be had in any other way. The Lord was very specific and very definite in the matter of marriage" (*Deseret News*, Church Section, November 12, 1977). On another occasion, Spencer W. Kimball bluntly stated that "the ordinance of sealing is an absolute, and that without it there can be no salvation in the eternal world, no eternal life" ("The Ordinances of the Gospel," as cited in *Achieving a Celestial Marriage*, page 204). As we have noted earlier, Mormon theology teaches that those who have been married in the temple can become Gods, whereas those who refuse to go through the endowment ritual become servants for all eternity. These teachings are, of course, very objectionable to orthodox Christians.

The fact that so many changes have been made in the temple ceremony over the years provides powerful evidence against the claim that it came to Joseph Smith by divine revelation. While it is true that these changes have made the endowment more palatable to the Mormon people, they do not bring the ceremony into conformity to Christian beliefs. In Mark 2:21, Jesus said that "No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse." The endowment ritual not only has many patches in it, but it also has patches on top of patches. Even though there have been improvements in the temple ceremony, it is still filled with material taken from the Masonic ritual and concepts that are not Biblical. Sewing new patches on the many rents in this old garment will not really solve the problem. The entire ceremony and the idea of men becoming Gods needs to be abandoned.

While we do not know what the future holds for Mormonism, we are very encouraged by recent developments. More and more Mormons are beginning to reject the concept that "when the leaders speak, the thinking has been done," and many of them are turning to the Lord for help. We feel that the recent changes in the endowment ritual will serve as a catalyst in bringing LDS people to the truth. While the discussion of the temple ceremony used to be almost completely taboo, active Mormons are now coming into our bookstore and discussing the matter with us. A number of them, who have recently gone through the temple, have provided important details concerning the changes. We have also received word that they are discussing these matters among themselves. Those of us who have labored for years to bring the truth to the Mormons are excited about the future. We have been ridiculed in the past by those who did not believe our work could have any affect on the leadership of the church. It is our belief that a large number of Mormons are growing tired of blindly following their leaders and that we will see tens of thousands of them turning to the Lord.

For those who are interested in learning more about the endowment ceremony, we recommend our new book, *Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, 1842-1990*. . . .

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WITCHCRAFT CONTROVERSY REKINDLED

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for September 1988, we noted that a statement by Walter Martin of Christian Research Institute had finally ended a controversy between our ministry and Ed Decker. At the heart of the disagreement was a question regarding the influence of witchcraft and Satanism on the Mormon temple ceremony. We felt that although there were

occultic influences in the endowment ritual, Mr. Decker had made some very exaggerated claims in his newsletter. Furthermore, we maintained that a member of his staff, William Schnoebelen, also misrepresented the facts in a booklet he coauthored with James Spencer. This pamphlet is entitled, *Mormonism's Temple of Doom*. Ed Decker had called upon his very close personal friend, Walter Martin and CRI, the organization Martin had founded, to settle the dispute, and Decker and Schnoebelen agreed to submit "ourselves and this ministry to them in the matter. We agree to submit to their findings and take whatever action they deem necessary." Walter Martin and his researchers looked into the matter and finally issued a statement which strongly supported our position. In this report, Walter Martin stated:

Herein is our position pertaining to some of the views advanced in the booklet. . . . we agree . . . that there are similarities and parallels among Mormonism and some forms of modern Witchcraft and Satanism. However, as Utah Lighthouse Ministry and others **have correctly pointed out**, what similarities there are stem **not** from Mormonism borrowing directly from Witchcraft or Satanism, but the commonality that all three have in being heavily influenced by Free Masonry . . .

We understand how and why Mr. Schnoebelen arrived at his conclusion . . . We however cannot endorse his premises, nor the overall conclusion as represented in *Mormonism's Temple of Doom*. . . . overall we **cannot approve the booklet** and all of its conclusions.

We obtained this statement directly from the Christian Research Institute and will provide a free copy of the entire report to anyone who requests it.

In a letter to us dated September 18, 1988, Ed Decker promised that the booklet would be modified to conform to Walter Martin's criticism:

This letter is to acknowledge that Christian Research Institute (CRI) has completed its review . . . It is our understanding that they have forwarded a copy of their conclusions to you . . . Our commitment to Dr. Martin was that we would take whatever correction they gave in the matter. To that end, I have met with both Bill Schnoebelen and Jim Spencer with regard to Dr. Martin's statements about the "Temple of Doom" book. They readily agreed to modify the next printing of the book, which is about due, to report Dr. Martin's conclusions regarding the historical origins of the temple ritual. Dr. Martin also assured us that CRI would continue to carry the book as soon as that change has been made.

Since Walter Martin and his researchers bluntly stated that they "cannot endorse his [Schnoebelen's] premises, nor the overall conclusion as represented in *Mormonism's Temple of Doom*," we presumed that the booklet would have to be carefully rewritten to pass muster. We accepted Ed Decker's promise that they would "modify the next printing of the book." To our surprise, however, when we obtained the new printing, we could not find any changes regarding the important matters which had been brought to their attention by CRI. It is true that a date has been changed from 1970 to 1971 on page 63, and the word "Roman" has been added before "Catholic" on the next line, but these changes are trivial and do not in any way correct the serious errors in the book. Moreover, there was no answer to the weighty charges we had published in the enlarged edition of *The Lucifer God Doctrine*. It would appear that the authors did not want to make any changes which would indicate that they were backing down from their extreme conclusions or that could be used by the Mormons to show dishonesty was used in the first edition.

Since Walter Martin has passed away, we will probably never know exactly what transpired between him and the three individuals with whom we disagreed—Decker, Schnoebelen

and Spencer. We do know, however, that they completely ignored the criticism found in Martin's official CRI statement and at least one of the items which Martin had specifically pointed out to them. In a letter dated February 2, 1989, William Schnoebelen acknowledged:

. . . we submitted ourselves to Dr. Walter Martin and CRI . . . He disagrees with one statement in my book, on p. 14 which says that "Ample evidence exists to prove that Joseph Smith stole the temple endowment from Masonry or witchcraft." He would prefer to say that "Mormonism, Freemasonry, and Wicca are streams of the same Satanic river."

Since Mr. Schnoebelen admitted that Walter Martin was displeased with this statement, we would expect the booklet to have been altered to conform to Martin's suggestion. Instead, however, the statement reads exactly the same as in the old edition: "Ample evidence exists to prove that Joseph Smith stole the temple endowment from Masonry or witchcraft . . ." (see p. 14)

While there was a great deal of talk about submitting to CRI, there seems to have been no action to fit the rhetoric. It would appear that these men originally went to Walter Martin because they felt he would come down heavily on their side of the issue and take us to task. When CRI's final conclusions agreed with ours, they simply ignored the criticism and refused to submit as they had promised.

At any rate, although we have remained silent in our newsletter concerning this issue since November 1988, those who have opposed our attempt to stop the dissemination of inaccurate information on the Mormon temple ritual have become increasingly vocal. James Spencer, for example, wrote an article entitled, "THE VINDICATION OF TEMPLE OF DOOM" (see *Through the Maze*, Issue No. 23). On May 14, 1990, Ed Decker appeared on the radio program, *The Bible Answer Man*, and made these comments: "Well, we don't agree on some particular items regarding the Mormon temple ritual . . . The Tanners, Jerald in particular, feels that I'm a little too harsh on that and that I've drawn conclusions that shouldn't be drawn . . . I think that we've been vindicated."

Those who are still supporting *Mormonism's Temple of Doom* are circulating what William Schnoebelen claims is a copy of a "recent letter from Dr. Martin." As strange as it may seem, this letter appears to give support to the very booklet Walter Martin had previously disapproved. While it is possible that Martin could have prepared such a statement, reason would tell us that the use of the endorsement would have to be contingent upon the authors modifying the booklet "to report Dr. Martin's conclusions regarding the historical origins of the temple ritual" (Letter from Ed Decker, September 18, 1988). Since there was absolutely no attempt to correct the false information in the booklet, it is obvious that such an endorsement would be of no value. A member of the staff at CRI, in fact, told us that it was his understanding that *Mormonism's Temple of Doom* would be revised and he was later shocked to learn that it was not corrected to conform with the truth. He felt that Walter Martin had put his full trust in these men and had no idea that they would not keep their word.

However this may be, a photocopy of the letter which Mr. Schnoebelen mailed on February 2, 1989, contained these words at the end of the letter: "(Signed) Dr. Walter Martin[,] Author, *The Kingdom of the Cults*," That the word "Signed," appeared in parentheses, clearly shows that it is not an actual photocopy of the original letter. The original letter, of course, should have Walter Martin's handwritten signature on it. It is obvious, therefore, that what Schnoebelen sent was a copy of the letter which had been completely retyped. One would think that it would be simpler for Mr. Schnoebelen to make a photocopy

of the original. In addition, it would appear more authoritative with Walter Martin's own handwritten signature on it. Although there may be some other explanation, we suspect that there is some reason that the original letter has to be suppressed. It could be that the original contained additional information which might be embarrassing to the authors of the booklet. For example, Walter Martin could have detailed how the booklet would have to be revised before they could use the statement. Whatever the case may be, we would like to see the original letter in its entirety or at least a good photocopy of it. A retyped copy of this controversial document is certainly not sufficient.

One would think that after the devastating evidence we printed in *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*, Ed Decker would be more careful in his public statements concerning Mormonism. Instead, however, he seems to have thrown caution to the wind. On the radio program, *The Bible Answer Man*, May 15, 1990, Mr. Decker gave a revealing demonstration of his ability to fabricate evidence to support his own opinions. He spoke concerning the film, *The God Makers*, claiming that he was the moving force behind the production of that film. Mr. Decker apparently felt that he had to impress the listening audience with the effect the film had on slowing down the growth of the Mormon Church. He, therefore, made this fantastic statement regarding a speech given by Mormon Apostle M. Russell Ballard at Brigham Young University on November 14, 1989:

Well, Elder Ballard spoke at BYU . . . and he said that in evaluating the 1980s and the 1990s, he said that the church had planned and expected 10,000,000 people in the church at the end of the 1980s and I remember in the early 1980s that that was spoken of a lot more than it was in the end of the 1980s. . . . he said that the church had only 7,000,000 members and while that's an outstanding number of people who are in the church today, he said that's 3,000,000 short of the plan, and that instead of seeing 20,000,000 people—doubling again in the next decade—they could only see like about 14,000,000 people if the trend continued at the pace the church was going today. And he said the reason that the church had not grow[n] was primarily at the foot of the former Mormons and specifically the “God maker” film, and so I feel like that's what we accomplished.

We were immediately suspicious of Mr. Decker's statements concerning Apostle Ballard's speech. The Mormon leaders are always very careful not to say anything that would give comfort to their critics. To make such an admission at a BYU Devotional would be like giving gun powder to the enemy. At any rate, H. Michael Marquardt has provided us with an audio tape of the speech and we checked it out carefully to see if it contained the comments Ed Decker attributed to Apostle Ballard. Unfortunately for Mr. Decker's credibility, we were unable to find anything concerning *The God Makers* causing a loss of membership in Ballard's speech or even anything concerning the church losing 3,000,000 prospective converts. Instead, Apostle Ballard boasted that: “Worldwide church membership has now increased to more than 7,000,000. . . . The day of 50 to 60 thousand full-time missionaries is not far off.” The speech does have one brief mention of *The God Makers*, but it is only a passing reference to the fact that the church has always had enemies. Mr. Marquardt has transcribed this part of the tape and we have verified its accuracy: “In recent years the church has been attacked openly by producers of the film *The Godmakers*. A concerted effort by a band of enemies of the church is underway at this very hour.” The speech gives no indication that either *The God Makers* or the work of any of the church's critics has had any effect on the growth of the church. Moreover, Apostle Ballard

never mentioned anything about the plan to have 10,000,000 members by 1990, nor did he refer to the church's plan to have 20,000,000 members by the turn of the century.

It was pointed out to us that this erroneous information concerning Apostle Ballard's speech was also printed in Ed Decker's *Saints Alive in Jesus Newsletter* in January 1990. In this issue we find the following:

Elder M. Russell Ballard spoke at BYU according to *The Provo Herald* of 11/14/89. He announced that the Church had . . . “more than 7 million members . . .” Viewers of THE GOD MAKERS will recall an LDS graph in the early part of the film which predicted that the church would hit 10 million by 1990. Ballard lamented that the church did not meet that membership goal[.] He laid the blame for the failure at the feet of the opposition and specifically blamed the film, THE GOD MAKERS. . . . In this decade, the church grew from 4.4 million to 7.0 million. However we praise God that those figures reflect a 3 million member shortfall. We have been led to believe that the spiritual offensive spearheaded by THE GOD MAKERS has cut their planned gains by more than 50%!

The reader will notice that Ed Decker attributed this information to the November 14, 1989, issue of *The Provo Herald*. This newspaper, like the tape of the address, has absolutely nothing in it that supports the claim that “Ballard lamented that the church did not meet that membership goal,” and raises still another problem. The reader is referred to “an LDS graph in the early part of the film [*The God Makers*] which predicted that the church would hit 10 million by 1990.” When we examined a video of *The God Makers*, we found a graph, but it did not have the projected church growth for 1990. It was pointed out to us, however, that it was possible that when the film was transferred to the video that the right side of this graph had been accidentally cut off. A check with a ministry that had a copy of the film revealed that this was the case. The graph did have a projected growth for 1990 as Ed Decker had claimed. This graph, however, did not support Mr. Decker's conclusion. Instead of 10,000,000 members, the church's graph predicted a growth of only 6,491,200 by 1990. Since the church's magazine, *The Ensign*, listed 7,300,000 members for the last day of 1989, it would appear that church growth had actually exceeded the projection by 808,800. In addition, it is clear from the graph in *The God Makers* that the projection applies to the end of 1990 not to the end of 1989 as Mr. Decker had assumed. We must, therefore, take into consideration the increase which will take place during this year. In 1989, the church membership increased by 580,000. Since it will probably increase by at least that amount if not more in 1990, we have to add these members to the 808,800. This would give a total of 1,388,800 more members than had been projected for 1990. Since Mr. Decker had claimed that the church had fallen 3,000,000 short of the goal, this would mean that his figures were off by well over 4,000,000!

Now, while we do not doubt that *The God Makers* had some effect on the growth of the Mormon Church, the church stepped up its missionary program and actually gained more members than it had predicted. There is just no way that we can believe that Mr. Decker's work, or that of all of the ministries to the Mormons combined, caused “a 3 million member shortfall” in the membership of the church. Ed Decker went even further in his interview on *The Bible Answer Man* program. As we have shown, he claimed that Apostle Ballard also lamented that because of the damage which had been done, the church would now only have 14,000,000 members by the turn of the century and thus there would be a shortfall of 6,000,000!

It seems only fair to expect any ministry that criticizes the misrepresentations in LDS history and doctrine to be equally concerned about accuracy in its own statements and literature. When we dealt with the changes in Joseph Smith's story of the First Vision, we were forced to the conclusion that he either deliberately changed his story to fit his evolving theology or he was living in a fantasy world and could not separate the truth from fiction. What can we say with regard to Ed Decker's report of Apostle Ballard's speech? Using exactly the same standard as we have used in our study of Mormonism, we feel that the situation looks very grave. Although we do not know what was going on in Mr. Decker's mind, it is obvious that the truth has been completely distorted. Moreover, some ministries have reprinted this false information and have compounded the problem. They, no doubt, did not have any intention of misleading anyone. Mr. Decker was taken at his word. After all, it is very hard for many people to believe that those engaged in ministries would attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of their readers in this manner. Nevertheless, we simply have to face the truth about the matter.

It would appear that what happened was that Ed Decker received a copy of *The Provo Herald* and saw that Apostle Ballard had mentioned *The God Makers*. This, of course, is some type of an achievement because the Mormon leaders hardly ever refer to the works of their adversaries. Mr. Decker must have been extremely impressed by this article and either deliberately set out to deceive or else allowed his imagination to run wild. In any case, he remembered seeing some sort of graph indicating that the church would grow to 10,000,000 members. He felt that it was the graph he used in *The God Makers*. As we have shown, however, this graph actually projected that by 1990 the church would have only 6,491,200 members. Although we do not know for certain, it may be that Mr. Decker was actually thinking of a graph he saw in the *Salt Lake City Messenger* or in our book, *The Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 3, page 164. In the book, two graphs which we prepared are shown. The graphs themselves could not have been the source, but just above the graphs we reported that the Mormons predicted "that if they continue to grow at the same rate they will have 10,000,000 members by 2000 A. D. (*Deseret News*, Church Section, October 21, 1967, page 1)." If this was the source, Mr. Decker's memory failed him to some extent. Although the statement concerning "10,000,000 members" fits Decker's comments, it really referred to the year 2000, not 1990.

With this incorrect information in his mind, Ed Decker reasoned that if the Mormons only had 7,000,000 members by 1990, this would be a "3 million member shortfall." Since he was convinced that *The God Makers* had a very significant effect on the Mormon Church, he just knew that this "shortfall" must mainly stem from his work with regard to that film. The next step, of course, was to put all this information into the mouth of a Mormon leader—i.e., Apostle Ballard. This, of course, is the same type of thing that Mark Hofmann did when he forged documents. We are not saying that Ed Decker created any actual document other than his newsletter or even that he did this deliberately. Nevertheless, the facts speak for themselves; a fabricated story has been created by Mr. Decker and it has been widely circulated throughout the land.

Now that Ed Decker's ability to make up stories has been clearly demonstrated, it raises serious questions concerning many of his sensational claims. On *The Bible Answer Man* program, May 15, 1990, Ed Decker was asked: "Have you experienced someone actually trying to kill you or is this just

sensationalism?" In response to that question, Decker replied that it had nothing to do with sensationalism but, in fact, really occurred: ". . . it comes with the territory and not very often or highly successful, thank God . . . we just take it with a grain of salt . . . I was poisoned in Scotland . . . it comes with the territory and [is] something you have to learn to live with." In the *Saints Alive in Jesus Newsletter*, September 1986, Mr. Decker wrote: "Pray for my health, which has deteriorated badly. The day after Capstone, I came down with Legionnaires' Disease. . . . my body still had not recovered from the Scotland poisoning and the flesh was (and is) weak." Although Decker was supposed to have been given a dose of arsenic poison which was several times stronger than that required to kill a person, he claimed that God had healed him.

A man who was with Ed Decker at the time of the alleged poisoning has called us from Scotland and expressed his disbelief in Decker's story. Another man has been seriously investigating this matter and claims to have evidence that the whole story was hatched up. The charge that Mr. Decker has been making up sensational stories to achieve both notoriety and contributions is very serious indeed. If the "Scotland poisoning" really did occur, there should be some witnesses available or evidence in hospital or police records which would verify the story. If Mr. Decker has any evidence to that effect, we would be willing to print it in our next newsletter. If, however, he was not actually tested for arsenic poisoning, then there is no reason to believe the story.

Ed Decker has created a great deal of fear in the hearts of many people with his stories. Many Christians are afraid to come to Utah for fear they might lose their lives. We recently received a very strange call from Mr. Decker in which he claimed he had received an anonymous call from a man who told him he was part of an assassination team that received directions from a member of the First Presidency in the Mormon Church. According to Decker, the man said that three people had been marked for death. One of the authors (Jerald Tanner) was among that number and was to be killed with a bomb. Ed Decker indicated that the individual involved in the conspiracy later felt very bad about the matter and had decided to expose the plot.

We felt that it was very strange that this man—if he really existed—would call Ed Decker because Decker's name was not even on the hit list. It seemed far more reasonable that he would have contacted the individuals whose lives were in danger. Mr. Decker claimed that the informant told him that his name was not on the list because he had become such a well-known public figure that they did not dare assassinate him for fear of the bad publicity. In any case, we found it very interesting that the Mormon leader who was supposed to oversee the assassination team was the very same man Decker himself had been strongly attacking in his newsletter. Although we can not prove it, we strongly suspect that this entire story, like the story concerning Apostle Ballard, was a figment of Ed Decker's fertile imagination.

In the book, *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*, we present a great deal of evidence to show the unreliability of the work on the Mormon temple ceremony which has been published by Ed Decker, William Schnoebelen and James Spencer. Until the objections we have raised in this book have been specifically answered, no one should be deceived into believing that their work has been vindicated. *The Lucifer-God Doctrine* is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry.



ANOTHER FREE BOOK!

A Free Copy of *Hearts Made Glad: The Charges of Intemperance Against Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet* will be sent with every **\$20 order**.

Offer ends August 15, 1990.

NOTE: In order to receive this free book you **must** request it when you send your order!

Our good friend, LaMar Petersen, the author of *Hearts Made Glad*, has donated a large number of copies of his books to help our ministry. This book throws a great deal of light on Joseph Smith's revelation known as the Word of Wisdom and Smith's flippant attitude towards it. The Word of Wisdom forbids the use of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, tea and coffee. A Mormon who continues to break the Word of Wisdom is considered weak in the faith. Such disobedience to this revelation can bar a person from the temple. Incredible as it may seem, Mr. Petersen shows the if Joseph Smith the prophet were alive today, he would not be able to enter the temple because of his frequent use of alcoholic beverages—a practice which continued until the day of his death.

SPECIAL OFFER ON HOFMANN BOOK

We are very happy to report that Robert Lindsey's book, *A Gathering of Saints* is now available in paper-back. We feel that this is the best book for the average reader on Mark Hofmann's forgery of Mormon documents. Reg. \$4.95—Special price if ordered before August 15, 1990: **\$3.95** (add \$1.00 minimum postage.)

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