

# **HOFMANN TALKS!**

## **MORMON APOSTLE DALLIN OAKS UPSET WITH HIS CONFESSION**

In earlier issues of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* we have printed a great deal of information concerning Mark Hofmann and his attempt to embarrass the Mormon Church with his forgeries. Hofmann, of course, finally admitted that he had murdered two people because his fraudulent dealings were about to be revealed and was sent to the Utah State Prison. As part of the plea bargain Mr. Hofmann agreed to meet with the prosecution and give details concerning his crimes. We are now pleased to announce that we have photographically printed the transcripts of Mark Hofmann's discussions with attorneys from the Salt Lake County Attorney's Office. They are published in 3 volumes under the title, *Hofmann's Confession*.



**Dallin Oaks**

Just after we published a large advertisement in the two major Salt Lake City papers stating that we would be printing the transcripts, a bizarre development occurred. A man reported to us that he had been told by someone in the County Attorney's Office that a copyright would be placed on the transcripts. The news media investigated and found that the matter was being discussed. We publicly responded that even if a copyright notice appeared on the transcripts, we would publish them and force the County to take us to court. We had recently won a suit over copyright and were certain that there was no way that what had previously been described as a "public document" could be copyrightable. On July 30, 1987, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

The Utah Lighthouse Ministry and Bookstore . . . placed a one-half page advertisement in the *Salt Lake Tribune* announcing that . . . they will be re-printing and undercutting the county attorney's \$60 price by more than \$40 for those who want to order early.

That prompted some members of the County Attorney's Office to begin researching whether the transcript could be copyrighted. But County Attorney David Yocom, who was out of town last week, said Wednesday that he has no intention of copyrighting what he has referred to in the past as a "public document."

We were very happy to learn of Mr. Yocom's decision on the matter. Although we felt that we could win a lawsuit, we knew from our experience with the other suit (which we finally won after it was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court), that it would cost a great deal of money to take on the County.

### **CONFIRMS OUR THEORY**

Mark Hofmann's confessions corroborate the material which we have been printing in the *Salt Lake*

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*City Messenger* for almost three and a half years. Our theory that the Hofmann documents may be spurious was criticized by both Mormon and non-Mormon scholars before the bombings. While at first we were impressed with Hofmann's "discoveries," we eventually came to have grave doubts about the authenticity of the documents. One of the editors of this newsletter (Jerald) wrote the following in the book, *Tracking the White Salamander*:

Nineteen months before local and federal investigators began working on the Salt Lake bombing's case, Utah Lighthouse Ministry began its own investigation concerning the authenticity of the documents Mark Hofmann was selling the Mormon Church and other collectors. In this inquiry we obtained information from Washington, D.C. and ten different states. We even interviewed a convicted murderer at the Utah State Prison.

Our investigation began in March 1984 just after we were given extracts from the so-called Salamander letter. Sandra and I had been acquainted with Mark Hofmann for a number of years before he "discovered" this controversial letter. The first recollection I have of actually meeting Mr. Hofmann was in 1980. . . . Just after he discovered the Anthon transcript . . . Hofmann came to our store and discussed the discovery. Although he had served as a Mormon missionary in England, it soon became evident that he did not fully trust the Mormon leaders. He said, in fact, that he was suspicious that the Church might be bugging his phone. He did not claim, however, to have any real evidence about the matter.

In the years that followed our first meeting Mr. Hofmann would occasionally visit our bookstore and tell of the remarkable discoveries that he was making. In the later part of November 1983 I first heard that Mark Hofmann had a letter which was supposed to have been written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris. It was dated Oct. 23, 1830, and was addressed to W. W. Phelps. When I learned of the contents of the letter, I realized that it could deal a devastating blow to the Mormon Church. Sandra and I had previously written a book entitled, *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*. In this book we presented strong evidence that Joseph Smith was involved in money-digging and magic. Martin Harris' letter seemed to provide new and exciting evidence which supported our thesis. This letter is known as the Salamander letter because Martin Harris was supposed to have written that Joseph Smith claimed when he went to get the gold plates for the Book of Mormon, a "white salamander" in the bottom of the hole "transfigured himself" into a "spirit" and "struck me 3 times."

Fortunately, I was able to obtain some revealing extracts from the letter and was preparing to print them

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

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

In any case, parallels I had discovered between the Salamander letter and *Mormonism Unveiled* reminded me very much of the work I had done on Joseph Smith's *History*. Although what I discovered about the Salamander letter was not conclusive proof that it was a forgery, it was certainly suspicious. It seemed, in fact, to throw a real monkey wrench into all my plans concerning the publication of the letter. Since I knew that it was very unlikely that anyone else would spot these parallels and realize their significance, there was some temptation to keep the matter to myself. I knew, however, that God knew what I had seen, and I began to feel that He had shown me these unpleasant facts to warn me against endorsing the letter. Furthermore, I knew that I would never be satisfied if my case against Mormonism was based on fraudulent material. It was clear, therefore, that there was only one course of action which I could follow—i.e., print the whole truth in the *Messenger*. In the March 1984 issue, therefore, we raised the question of forgery by printing the title, "Is It Authentic?" Under this title we wrote:

At the outset we should state that we have some reservations concerning the authenticity of the letter, and at the present time we are not prepared to say that it was actually penned by Martin Harris. . . . We will give the reasons for our skepticism as we proceed with this article.

(*Tracking the White Salamander*, pages 2, 4 and 6)

In the March 1984 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* we went on to reveal the disturbing parallels between the Salamander letter and E.D. Howe's *Mormonism Unveiled* and then noted:

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

This was the first criticism of Mark Hofmann's documents to appear in print. While we had expected that some Mormon critics might be upset with our insinuation of forgery, we were surprised to find that the top Mormon scholars opposed our research. On August 25, 1984, John Dart wrote the following in the *Los Angeles Times*:

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

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

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

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

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

We will probably never know exactly what role our material on Hofmann's forgeries played in the investigation made by the authorities. One investigator, however, did acknowledge to us that he was asked to test some of our theories. The Salt Lake County Sheriffs Office contacted us not long after Mark Hofmann became the chief suspect in the murders and wanted to know what material we had to establish forgery. After that we had many conversations with investigators. Our printed

material was carefully examined by the Salt Lake County Attorney's Office, and we spent two full days answering questions concerning it and the contacts we had with Hofmann and his associates. We were strongly encouraged to keep in touch with the County Attorney's Office and give the prosecutors any new ideas or information that came to mind. One of the investigators felt that Jerald should give testimony at Hofmann's trial. He believed that this would give historical perspective to the case they were trying to build against the documents. Although this investigator seemed to be rather excited about the idea, we seriously doubt that the County Attorney's Office would have wanted to put a witness on the stand who was so deeply involved in controversy over the truthfulness of Mormonism. In any case, it would have been interesting to demonstrate how closely our evidence, derived from historical investigation, dovetailed with the hard evidence which document experts obtained from physical testing. Before Hofmann was questioned at the Utah State Prison, we were asked by a detective to prepare a list of questions which we felt investigators should ask him. As it turned out, however, the detectives were not allowed to question Hofmann. The questions were all asked by the prosecutors from the County Attorney's Office. Since Mr. Hofmann would not allow a detective to join in the questioning concerning the murders, the County Attorney's Office terminated the interviews.

However this may be, in his confession Mark Hofmann finally admitted that the theory that we had proposed in the March 1984 issue of the *Messenger* for the origin of the Salamander letter was indeed correct. As we stated earlier, we had suggested that Howe's book, *Mormonism Unveiled* was used and that the toad mentioned there was transformed into a Salamander. Mr. Hofmann gave this testimony:

**Q** And then the language about "the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole and struck me three times"?

**A** Yes, there's a reference in Howe to Joseph Smith being struck. . . .

**Q** Now the white salamander, you were going to explain that?

**A** I was only going to say that the idea for the white salamander derived from the toad in A. D. Howe's book. Salamander, from my reading of folk magic, seemed more appropriate than a toad.

. . . .

**Q** What was your significance of what the significance [*sic*] the white salamander had?

A I don't believe I saw a reference to a white salamander, only a salamander, but I decided to spice it up.

Q There is two places in there [in *Mormonism Unveiled*] in reference to the toad.

A Yes.

Q In fact, it says on page 276, "which immediately transformed itself into a spirit."

A Yes. I thought the word, not wanting to sound like I was plagurizing [*sic*] from a book, I used the word *transfigured* rather than *transformed*.

Q "And gave him a tremendous blow."

A Yes.

Q You made three blows out of it, struck him twice or three times I think, rather than gave a tremendous blow?

A Again, I didn't want to sound like I was copying it word for word.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 440 and 445)

It is also interesting to note that Mark Hofmann seems to have used our photographic reproduction of *Mormonism Unveiled* in creating the Salamander letter:

Q . . . Is that *Mormonism Unveiled* . . . ?

A Yes.

Q Did you have a copy of your own?

A I had a Xerox copy published by the Tanners.

Q Is that similar to the one I have?

A Yes. (*Ibid.*, page 444)

In the March 1984 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, we mentioned a parallel between the Salamander letter and Joseph Knight's account of the discovery of the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. In later issues we pointed out many significant parallels between the two documents. Since the Joseph Knight account was locked up in the LDS Historical department and was not published until 1976, we felt that this provided strong evidence that the Salamander letter was a modern forgery. If we could have believed that the forgery had been done many years ago, then we would not have been so suspicious of Mark Hofmann. As it was, however, the evidence seemed to point toward Mark Hofmann. We reasoned that if he was not guilty of the forgery, he probably knew who the person was who had done it. In his testimony in the transcripts, pages 508-509, Mr. Hofmann admitted that he had indeed used the Joseph Knight account in his forgery:

Q Are you telling us then that you were aware of that Joseph Knight letter and used some of that information in composing the information in the Salamander letter?

A That's correct.

When Mark Hofmann was asked where he obtained the paper on which the Salamander letter was written, he replied: "I believe it came from the—It certainly came from a book at the University of Utah Library, I believe from the *Niles Register*" (*Ibid.*, page 457). In response to a question concerning the lines that appear on the paper, Mr. Hofmann responded: "I forged those with a pen." The reason for this was to "make it appear to be writing paper rather than an end sheet" (pages 458-59). He said that he probably used "ammonia" to age the ink and noted that the letter was "somewhat mildewed. I would have used bread mold in places to cause the spotting" (page 462). He claimed that the "postmark itself would have been photographed" off of a genuine letter and that the image was transferred to the paper obtained from the book (pages 463-465).

The reader may remember that a few months before the bombings a story was put forth that the Mormon Church had a secret document known as the Oliver Cowdery history which supported the Salamander letter. We became suspicious that the mysterious source of this report might be Hofmann himself. In the August 1985 issue of the *Messenger*, we suggested that Hofmann might be the "Deep Throat" who leaked the information. In his testimony, Mark Hofmann frankly admitted he "was the deep throat . . . described in the media." Hofmann was questioned as follows concerning the Oliver Cowdery history:

Q Is there anything to that story?

A No.

Q Is that all a creation of yours?

A That's pure creation.

. . . . .

A Yes, I was the deep throat or whoever I was described in the media. That [the person who wrote the story in the *Los Angeles Times*] would have been—

**MR. RICH:** That was John P.

**MR. STOTT:** Was it Dart?

A . . . Yes, I think it would have been John Dart is his name. . . . I told him this fabrication. It is purely made up. It's not based on anything I saw in the First Presidency's office or elsewhere.

. . . . .

Q The Oliver Cowdery [history] was made up by you?

A Right.

. . . . .

Q Why did you go to John Dart and why did you not go to a reporter and publish it?

A I didn't. My intention wasn't to have that happen . . . I said there were a couple reasons for the story. The other, obviously, would have been that part of the Oliver Cowdery History was there was a white salamander as far as Alvin's involvement and that would have validated the history presented in the forged Salamander letter.

**Q** Again made up by you?

A Again made up by me. One forged idea to validate another forged idea.

**Q** Not only then the whole thing was made up but you were aware by people recounting this story it was causing, I suppose, some considerable embarrassment to the LDS authorities?

A Yes.

**Q** But you went along with it to the point of giving an interview. What were your feelings during this time? Why were you doing that?

A As far as my feelings, there was actually a mixture of emotions. One of which was amusement for the whole idea. As far as the embarrassment to the Church, it is true that it was embarrassing but I was also interested to see how the Church would react to the situation. As far as giving the interview, I ended up consenting but I did it reluctantly . . . it was almost like I ended up getting dragged along with my own creation to past where I wanted to. . . .

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 451-456)

In our book, *Tracking the White Salamander*, we devoted an entire chapter to the McLellin collection—a group of documents Mark Hofmann maintained were embarrassing to the Mormon Church. We stated that “All the evidence, therefore, points to the inescapable conclusion that the McLellin collection was only a figment of Mark Hofmann's imagination” (page 47). Mr. Hofmann himself has now admitted that he never had such a collection:

**Q** Did you ever attempt to find a so-called McClellin Collection?

A No. (*Hofmann's Confession*, page 521)

After we discovered the parallels between the Salamander letter and the book, *Mormonism Unveiled*, we began to wonder if there might be some sort of plan or even conspiracy to control the direction of Mormon history through forgery. In an article published in the *New York Times*, February 16, 1986, Robert Lindsey wrote the following:

Court documents indicate that some prosecutors in the Salt Lake County Attorney's office believe Mr. Hofmann's goal was not only to obtain money from the church through the sale of the documents but also

to establish enough credibility that he could shape the world's perception of Mormonism.

This view is shared by a man here who was the first to suggest that Mr. Hofmann was forging his documents. He is Jerald Tanner, a former Mormon who heads the Utah Lighthouse Ministry, which for decades has been challenging the truth of much of Mormon doctrine.

In an interview, Mr. Tanner said he decided . . . that the Hofmann documents might be forgeries, even though some of them . . . supported his own iconoclastic views of Mormonism. . . .

Mr. Tanner said it appeared that Mr. Hofmann's growing credibility as a source of documents was putting him in a position where the documents he presented were considered unassailable. If that continued, Mr. Tanner said, Mr. Hofmann “could control the direction of Mormon history.”

In the transcripts, Mark Hofmann commented concerning the charge that he was trying to rewrite Mormon history:

A I won't go so far as to say I wanted to change Mormon history. Let me take that back. Maybe I did. I believed that the documents that I created could have been a part of Mormon history. I'm speaking specifically, for example, of the magic-related items. The 1825 Stool letter, the so-called Salamander Letter. In effect, I guess, the questions I asked myself in deciding on a forgery one of the questions was, what could have been? I had a concept of Church history and I followed that concept. (*Hofmann's Confession*, page 113)

On page 130, Mark Hofmann admitted: “. . . my version of the history is not sympathetic with the teachings of the Church.” Mr. Hofmann also stated:

It is true that I wrote the documents according to how I felt the actual events took place. In other words, I believe that Joseph Smith was involved with folk magic, but the idea there was more to keep it in harmony with what I thought potentially genuine, discoverable type documents may say. In other words, to make it fit the history as accurately as possible so that I wouldn't be found out or whatever. (*Ibid.*, page 427)

## FOOLING THE CHURCH

Mark Hofmann is now considered to be one of the greatest con men of the 20th century. On February 11, 1987, the *New York Times* published an article by Robert Lindsey which contained the following:

“Mark Hofmann was unquestionably the most skilled forger this country has ever seen,” said Charles Hamilton, a New York document dealer who is widely regarded as the nation’s preeminent detector of forged documents. . . .

Mr. Hamilton said Mr. Hofmann “perpetrated by far the largest monetary frauds through forgery that this country has ever had,” adding, “He fooled me—he fooled everybody.”. . .

Among those fooled by Mr. Hofmann’s documents were hundreds of specialists in Mormon history. . . .

Investigators have said that Mr. Hofmann was as successful in selling forged documents in New York as he was in Utah. They say he may have collected more than \$2 million selling rare documents purportedly written or signed by such literary and historical figures as Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Jack London and Jim Bridger. . . .

After examining the white salamander letter, experts working for the Federal Bureau of Investigation said they could find no evidence that it was forged. . . .

In the confession, Mark Hofmann related that he was only in his teens when he fooled the U.S. Treasury Department by electroplating “a mint mark on a coin to make it more valuable to a collector.” He claimed that “a coin dealer . . . couldn’t believe that I could own such a valuable coin in my youth. I think I was only 15 years old. The coin being worth thousands of dollars even back in those days. Anyway a coin dealer sent it in to have it examined and it ended up going to the Treasury Department where it was pronounced genuine. And my feeling was that if the Treasury Department or I should say my rationalization was that if the Treasury Department pronounces it genuine that it is genuine by definition.” Mr. Hofmann went on to say “that’s also when I lost respect for forensic examination, I guess” (*Hofmann’s Confession*, pages 409-410).

Although Mark Hofmann served on a mission for the Mormon Church and was even married in the temple, he says that he “lost faith in the Mormon Church” when he was right “around the age of 14” (*Ibid.*, page 112). On pages 425-426, Hofmann revealed:

No, that didn’t cause concern in my mind as far as my feelings where it’s not so much what is genuine and what isn’t as what people believe is genuine.

My example would be the Mormon Church, which may be a bad example since I’m sure you’re both believers in it. I don’t believe in the religion as far as that Joseph Smith had the first vision or received the plates from the Angel Moroni or whatever. It doesn’t detract from the social good that the Mormon Church

can do. To me it is unimportant if Joseph Smith had that vision or not as long as people believe it. The important thing is that people believe it.

In his youth Mark Hofmann would have been taught that Mormon Church leaders received direct revelations from God. For example, in the Ward Teacher’s Message for June, 1945, we read:

Any Latter-day Saint who denounces or opposes, whether actively or otherwise, any plan or doctrine advocated by the “prophets, seers or revelators” of the Church is cultivating the spirit of apostasy. . . .

It should be remembered that Lucifer has a very cunning way of convincing unsuspecting souls that the general authorities of the Church are as likely to be wrong as they are to be right. This sort of game is Satan’s favorite pastime . . . He wins a great victory when he can get members of the Church to speak against their leaders and to “do their own thinking.”. . .

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. God works in no other way. To think otherwise, without immediate repentance, may cost one his faith, may destroy his testimony, and leave him a stranger to the kingdom of God. (*Deseret News*, Church Section, May 26, 1945, page 5)

According to Ezra Taft Benson, the present Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the Mormon Church, “The Prophet Will Never Lead the Church Astray” (“Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophets,” an address given at BYU, February 26, 1980; printed in *Following the Brethren*, page 5). President Benson claims that the leaders of the Church have special discernment which is far superior to “earthly knowledge”:

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

Sometimes there are those who feel their earthly knowledge on a certain subject is superior to the heavenly knowledge which God gives to His Prophet on the same subject. . . . We encourage earthly knowledge in many areas, but remember if there is ever a conflict between earthly knowledge and the words of the prophet, you stand with the prophet and you’ll be blessed and time will vindicate you. (*Ibid.*, page 6)

On page 10 of the same address, President Benson said: “NINTH: *The Prophet Can Receive Revelation on Any Matter—Temporal or Spiritual.*”

Mark Hofmann, seems to have finally come to the conclusion that the Mormon Church was not led by revelation and that he could even deceive the “living prophets” and the top Mormon scholars as easily as he did the U.S. Treasury. On page 99 of his confession, Mr. Hofmann said that he could “look someone in the eye and lie” and didn’t believe that “someone could be inspired” in a religious sense as to what “my feelings or thoughts were.” On page 112 he claimed that he “wasn’t fearful of the Church inspiration detecting the forgery.”

Although he claimed his main motive for most of the forgeries was “money,” when he decided to palm off his first major forgery on the church (the Anthon transcript), he was more concerned about the “fame involved” (page 96). The Anthon transcript is supposed to contain Joseph Smith’s own copy of the characters found on the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. Hofmann was later to admit that the paper was in reality “an end page out of a book in the [LDS] Institute Library at Utah State” (page 54). The ink was aged with “hydrogen peroxide” (page 24). Although the paper was already very old it still appeared too white. Hofmann, therefore, ran a hot iron over it to make it appear “well aged” (page 60). Neither the “living prophets” nor the church’s most noted scholars were able to detect the diabolical scheme. In fact, Mr. Hofmann was honored for making the “discovery,” and the church’s *Deseret News*, May 3, 1980, printed a photograph of Hofmann standing with Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the Church. Also present were President N. Eldon Tanner, President Marion G. Romney, Apostle Boyd K. Packer and Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley. Neither President Kimball nor any of the other General Authorities were able to detect anything wrong with either “Brother Hofmann” or the Anthon transcript. President Kimball, in fact, is shown making an examination of the transcript with a magnifying glass. In his confession, page 112, Hofmann said that he had “a combination of emotions. There was, of course, a little bit of fear involved since, of course, it was a forged document. There was some excitement involved, a feeling of duping them, I guess.” The church’s most noted apologist, Dr. Hugh Nibley, examined the transcript and claimed that it contained Egyptian characters. He, in fact, triumphantly announced: “Of course it’s translatable” (*The Herald, Provo, Utah*, May 1, 1980). According to the testimony of Church Archivist Donald Schmidt, the church gave Mr. Hofmann “\$20,000” worth of trade items for the transcript.

After the Anthon incident, Mark Hofmann deceived church officials time after time with his phony documents

and stories. Just after the bombings, President Gordon B. Hinckley acknowledged that the church had acquired “40-some” documents which came from Hofmann. Later it was admitted that in addition to these documents, Hofmann had given the church about 345 court records. Most of these were “returned to the Circuit Court clerk in Hancock County, Ill.” (*Deseret News*, April 12, 1986). There seems to have been a question as to whether these documents had been obtained illegally (see *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 12, 1986). In any case, Mark Hofmann deceived Mormon leaders even after the murders. In the Salt Lake County prosecutors’ summary of their first discussions with Mark Hofmann we find the following:

Hofmann said that he was very good at masking his emotions. As an example, he said that in the afternoon of the 15th he went to Dallin Oaks’ office to see if the McLellan transaction was to proceed. He said that even though Oaks talked and observed him, he fooled Oaks, and Oaks never suspected he was involved in the bombings. He also spoke with Hugh Pinnock in the basement parking lot and fooled him too. (*Hofmann’s Confession*, page SS-11)

As Mark Hofmann first began developing his nefarious plan to deceive the Mormon leaders, he noticed a weakness in them that he was able to exploit. This was that they were trying to hide the true history of the church from their people. He knew that church leaders were suppressing many early documents because they did not want members of the church to learn of their contents for fear that they would lose faith in Mormonism. Because of this Hofmann reasoned that there would be a market for controversial documents which the church leaders would buy up to suppress. In his confession, page 150, he noted that he felt “a controversial” document “always brings better money.” Hofmann, therefore, perceived church leaders as easy marks for a blackmail type of operation. His plan was to create embarrassing documents and offer them to the church with the pretext that this would keep them from falling into the hands of the “enemy.” The enemy, of course, would be those who would publish the contents of the documents to the world—i.e., Saints Alive, Utah Lighthouse Ministry, Christian Research Institute, etc. His *modus operandi* was to profess great loyalty for the church leaders while he was in reality stabbing them in the back. He gave this testimony concerning his contact with President Gordon B. Hinckley:

**Q** What was your purpose for giving it [the Thomas Bullock letter to Brigham Young] to the President?

A Probably the greatest purpose in my mind was to demonstrate to him my concern for the Church, or in other words, possibly, a potentially embarrassing document would not fall into hands that might use it against the Church. And to prepare him for future dealings as far as if my true interest and intent was for the welfare of the Church.

Q Was that something you were using to further your own purposes?

A Yes, it was.

Q Purposes of continuing to deal in similar types of forged documents?

A Yes. (*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 315-316)

In a speech given at the Brigham Young University Symposium, "Church History and Recent Forgeries," the Mormon Apostle Dallin H. Oaks tried very hard to make it appear that the church was not trying to suppress documents:

What interested me most was the fact that these forgeries and their associated lies grew out of their author's deliberate attempt to rewrite the early history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and that so many persons and organizations seized on this episode to attempt to discredit the Church and its leaders. . . .

In the course of this episode, we have seen some of the most sustained and intense LDS Church bashing since the turn of the century. In a circumstance where The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints could not say much without interfering with the pending criminal investigation and prosecution, the Church and its leaders have been easy marks for assertions and innuendo ranging from charges of complicity in murder to repeated recitals that the Church routinely acquires and **suppresses church history documents in order to deceive its members and the public.** . . . a February 11, 1987, *New York Times* feature states:

According to investigators, the church leaders purchased from Mr. Hofmann and then hid in a vault a number of 19th-century letters and other documents that cast doubt on the church's official version of its history.

This kind of character assassination attributed to anonymous "investigators" has been all-too-common throughout the media coverage of this whole event. . . .

Also conveniently omitted from mention in most of the repetitious media recitals of church suppression of documents is the fact that the most prominent Hofmann documents used to attack the origins of the Church—including Martin Harris' so-called Salamander letter, Joseph Smith's treasure-hunting letter to Josiah Stowel, and the Joseph Smith III blessing—were all made public by the Church many months before the

bombings triggered the intense public interest in this subject. . . .

In his interviews with the prosecutors, Mark Hofmann has recited the contents of conversations he said he had with President Hinckley, . . . I urge everyone to be thoughtful about who they will believe on conflicts of this nature, General Authorities whose statements about this whole episode have been confirmed by all subsequent investigations, or Mark Hofmann, who is renown for his record of deceit and his efforts to discredit the Church and its leaders. ("Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents," Brigham Young University, August 6, 1987, typed copy distributed to the news media, pages 1, 2, 4, 5 and 18)

Although Apostle Oaks would lead one to believe that the Mormon Church did not try to suppress Joseph Smith's 1825 "treasure-hunting letter to Josiah Stowel," a document which was actually forged by Mark Hofmann, all the evidence points in the other direction. Mark Hofmann's testimony with regard to this letter seems to fit very well with evidence from other sources:

A I may have shown it originally to Elder Durham I believe and he and I took it to President Hinkley's office.

Q Why would it have gone to Durham rather than Schmidt? Your other contact seems to have been with Schmidt.

A Only because of its controversial nature.

. . . .

**MR. BIGGS:** What did President Hinkley tell you relative to this document?

A He told me that for the time being, or in other words, without giving a date as far as how long this would be in effect, that the Council of the Twelve and the First Presidency and Elder Durham would be the only ones to know about this document.

Q Did he ask you some other questions about who else knew about the document?

. . . .

A Yes.

Q And did he ask you, does your wife know about the document?

A Yes.

Q What did you say?

A No.

Q Did he ask you, did he say who else knows about it?

A Yes.

Q What did you say?

A I told him that no one else within the Church knew about it. I left open the possibility that someone out of the Church. Obviously, I claimed to have acquired it from someone outside of the Church.

. . . .



**MR. STOTT:** . . . Did you have a subsequent meeting?

**A** I believe I had a total of three meetings concerning this document with President Hinkley. The last meeting when he gave me the the [sic] check and made the purchase.

.....

**MR. STOTT:** How did you come to settle on a price?

**A** I named a price and told him that I believed it was fair, and that that is what I would accept.

**Q** Was that the \$15,000?

**A** Yes, I believe that was the amount.

.....

**Q** On a Church account?

**A** Yes.

**Q** . . . Do you know what he did with with [sic] it [i.e., the letter]?

**A** I left it with him and he told me at a later time that he handed it to Francis Gibbons with instructions to put it in the vault.

**MR. YENGICH:** Did you keep a xeroxed copy?

**A** Yes I did, although I told him that I didn't.

.....

**MR. STOTT:** Rumors started circulating around that time about the letter. How did those rumors come up?

**A** Part of them came from me and part of them I believe came through Francis Gibbons . . . I believed at the time that Francis Gibbons had told Dean Jesse something concerning the document.

**Q** Who did you tell and what did you tell, basically?

**A** I mentioned the document to Lynn Jacobs, Brent Metcalf and Dean Jesse.

**Q** Was this something that you were not supposed to talk about once you sold it to Hinkley? Was it an agreement you weren't going to talk to anybody else or did you feel free to go ahead and talk about it?

**A** Yes, that was the agreement that I would not talk about it.

**Q** But you went ahead anyway?

**A** Yes.

.....

**Q** Dean Jesse obtained a copy of that later on. Do you know where he got the copy?

**A** Yes. I believe that he obtained a copy from me of the document but I believe that he had a type script beforehand of what the document said.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 353-359)

That President Hinckley bought the letter so that it could be suppressed is obvious to anyone who really

investigates the matter. The letter was purchased "on or about January 11, 1983" (*The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, page 5), but Church leaders never admitted that they had it until May 7, 1985! In 1984 we obtained a typescript of the letter and published it in *The Money-Digging Letters*. On page 3 we stated that we would "withhold judgment concerning its authenticity until we obtain more information concerning it." One would think that after we printed the contents of the letter, the Mormon Church would admit that it had the letter. Instead, however, the church decided to "stonewall." At about the time we printed the letter, we had a discussion with one of the top historians in the church. He lamented that the church had allowed itself to become involved in a cover-up situation with regard to the 1825 letter. On April 29, 1985, *Salt Lake Tribune* reporter Dawn Tracy wrote:

A letter reportedly written by Mormon Church founder Joseph Smith describing money-digging pursuits and treasure guarded by a clever spirit seems to have disappeared from view. . . .

Dr. Hill said he is convinced the letter is authentic or he wouldn't have cited the document . . . lie said he doesn't know where the letter is located now.

"It's a sad business that the letter is buried," said Dr. Hill. "With copies of the letter circulating, I can't see much benefit."

Research historian Brent Metcalfe said he knows from "very reliable, first-hand sources" the letter exists, and the Mormon Church has possession of it.

Church Spokesman Jerry Cahill denied the claim.

"The church doesn't have the letter," said Mr. Cahill. "It's not in the church archives or the First Presidency's vault." . . . He said that none of the confidential documents is the 1825 letter.

Someone may be playing word games, said George Smith, president of Signature Books, . . . "If the exact question isn't asked, someone can wink and say the church doesn't have it."

No, said Mr. Cahill, the church does not have possession of the letter. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 29, 1985)

On May 6, 1985, the *Salt Lake Tribune* published a letter George Smith wrote to the editor. In this letter he revealed that "some scholars have reported seeing it at the church offices. . . . A number of scholars have photocopies of the letter, . . ." These photocopies may very well have come from the copy which Mark Hofmann admits that he retained when he turned the letter over to Hinckley. When it became apparent to church leaders that the letter

was going to be published in a major newspaper without their consent, they decided to back down and admit its existence. Jerry Cahill, Director of Public Affairs for the Mormon Church, admitted in a letter to the editor of the *Tribune* that his earlier statement was incorrect:

. . . staff writer Dawn Tracy correctly quoted my statement to her that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints doesn't have a letter purportedly written in 1825 by Joseph Smith . . . either in the church archives or in the First Presidency's vault.

My statement, however, was in error. . . . Some months ago I was asked the same question by another inquirer and made a thorough check before responding. Dawn Tracy called me twice as she prepared her article and I responded without checking again.

When my published statement came to his attention, President Gordon B. Hinckley of the First Presidency of the church informed me of my error. The purported letter was indeed acquired by the church. For the present it is stored in the First Presidency's archives and perhaps some day may be the subject of the kind of critical study recently given to the purported letter of Martin Harris to W.W. Phelps. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 7, 1985)

It is very obvious from all this that the Mormon leaders were caught in a very embarrassing coverup with regard to the letter and that they only published it because their own scholars were preparing to release it to the press. *Time* magazine for May 20, 1985, reported that "The church offered no explanation for withholding news of the earliest extant document written by Smith, . . ." John Dart commented: "As it became clear during this week that photocopies of the letter would soon be circulated by sources outside the official church, Cahill announced that the church would discuss the contents and release a photocopy of the letter" (*Los Angeles Times*, May 11, 1985). It seems obvious that if the letter had upheld the image of Joseph Smith that church leaders wish to portray to the public, it would have been published immediately in the *Deseret News* with a large headline announcing its discovery. When Mark Hofmann "discovered" Joseph Smith's mother's 1829 letter, Mormon officials proclaimed it to be "the earliest known dated document" relating to the church, and it was hailed as a vindication of Joseph Smith's work. Since the letter to Stowell was supposed to have been written by the Prophet himself some four years earlier, we would expect it to receive even greater publicity. Instead, the Mormon leaders buried it and engaged in a cover-up. In the *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 20, 1985, Dawn Tracy revealed that even top Mormon historians, including the Church Archivist, were kept in the dark concerning the purchase of the 1825 letter:

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

While Apostle Oaks is correct in stating that the letter was released before the bombings, he "conveniently omitted" (to use his own words) the fact that the letter was suppressed for 28 months and was only released after the press had been furnished with a copy! Mark Hofmann, on the other hand, has admitted that he sold the letter to President Hinckley as part of a blackmail-like scheme and that he broke his agreement with Hinckley by talking about it and by circulating a photocopy. Dallin Oaks asks if we are going to believe Mark Hofmann, "who is renowned for his record of deceit" or the "General Authorities" of the church. Although we do not feel that we can put unconditional trust in Hofmann's confession, in this particular case all the evidence seems to show that he is being forthright about the matter. It appears, in fact, that Apostle Oaks is trying to cover up what really happened with his smooth talk.

One of the documents which the Mormon Church obtained that has still not been released is the Thomas Bullock letter. Mark Hofmann testified:

**MR. STOTT:** I want to go back on that Brigham Young Letter. . . . its dated January 27, 1865 from supposedly Thomas Bullock to Brigham Young. Are you familiar with that?

**A** Yes, I forged it, in fact.

. . . .

**Q** Why did you create that document, and what did you do with it?

**A** I created it to give validity to the Joseph Smith, 3rd Blessing since it deals with the blessing. What I did with it, I gave it to President Hinkley.

. . . .

**Q** What were the circumstances of your giving it to him?

**A** I made an appointment with him privately. I went in to his office and layed it on his desk. He expressed an interest in it and I left it there.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 309-311)

From what we can learn concerning this letter, Thomas Bullock accused Brigham Young of being the type of person who would destroy a document authored by Joseph Smith himself to protect his own position. The church kept this document locked safely away in a vault until prosecutors demanded access to the Hofmann documents. It has been suppressed for six years. Dallin Oaks tries to make it appear that the investigation into the

murders and forgeries prevented the Mormon Church from speaking about the Hofmann documents it had obtained:

During this same month of January, 1986, the Church turned all of its Hofmann-acquired documents over to the prosecutors, at their request. As a result, the Church could not make its Hofmann documents public to answer those innuendos of suppression without seeming to try to influence or impede the criminal investigation. (“Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents,” pages 3-4)

We seriously doubt that the release of the contents of the documents which were taken by the prosecution could have affected justice in the Hofmann case, and it seems unreasonable to believe that the church would not retain photocopies of the items. Even if this were the case, this does not explain why church leaders suppressed the Thomas Bullock letter to Brigham Young for four and a half years before the bombings. Apostle Oaks boasts:

On April 11, 1986, after months of searching in its records and collections, the Church published a complete list of the 48 documents and the groups of court records then known to have been acquired from Mark Hofmann. (*Ibid.*, page 4)

We suspect that the only reason church leaders published a list of documents was that they feared that the facts about these documents were about to be revealed at Hofmann’s preliminary hearing. Notice that the date given by Apostle Oaks was “April 11, 1986.” This was just a few days before the preliminary hearing began, but six months had elapsed since the bombings. Furthermore, the published description of the documents (see *Deseret News*, April 12, 1986) was obviously prepared by someone who was trying to prevent the controversial nature of the documents from becoming known. The description of the Bullock letter appears as item no. 48 and merely reveals that it is “concerning Bullock’s work in the Historical Department.” This innocuous statement concerning the letter veils the fact that Bullock and Young were supposed to have been fighting over the possession of the Joseph Smith III Blessing document and that Bullock did not trust Young’s honesty. Apostle Oaks says that the “list spoke for itself. “ In reality, the descriptions published with the list tend to lull the reader to sleep rather than reveal the true nature of the documents.

With regard to the Salamander letter, Mark Hofmann indicates that he became nervous about approaching the church. He, therefore, allowed his friend, Lyn Jacobs, to pose as the owner of the letter:

**Q** Wasn’t his dealings mainly with the archivist?  
**A** Yes.

**Q** Your dealings had actually been with some of the general authorities?

**A** Right.

**Q** Why did he believe he could get more than you then?

**A** My feeling was in offering it to the general authorities if I were to do it it would appear to be almost a blackmail type of attempt just because of the content of the letter and potential embarrassment to the Church, that I wanted to stay away from. He didn’t have any of those feelings as far as if he offended them.

**Q** Was there any concern on your part that this was maybe one too many documents for you to discover and let somebody else take the credit?

**A** Yes. That was also in my mind. Yes, I remember also thinking of that fact.

.....

**Q** . . . What was the purpose for coming up with the Salamander letter?

**A** Money. It’s a controversial type document, therefore it would be valuable and it was also, again somewhat of an experiment to see the Church’s reaction as far as, that always interested me.

**Q** Reaction in what way?

**A** As far as how they would handle it, if they would purchase it, if they would trust him enough, Lynn enough to keep his mouth shut. To enter into some sort of agreement to keep it confidential. If they would pay his exorbitant price he was demanding for it. . . .

**Q** When you created the document was it your idea to sell it to the Church?

**A** Yes.

**Q** Did it surprise you when Lynn came back and said Hinkley wouldn’t buy it?

**A** No, not given the price that Lynn was asking for it.

**Q** Now with the Stool Letter, you were aware that he bought the Stool Letter and it pretty well had been publicized?

**A** That’s right.

**Q** Now, were you at all surprised that he refused to buy the Salamander Letter which was a very similar type document?

**A** No. Like I say, a lot of it was almost like an experiment, in my mind as far as what his reaction would be. Lynn doesn’t come across as being a faithful Mormon like I do.

**Q** You did?

**A** Or at least like I pretended to. I didn’t think that President Hinkley would trust his silence or that he would appreciate Lynn’s manner, or boastfulness or whatever. . . .

.....

**A** I speculate if I would have been the one to offer it that it would have had the same fate is [as?] the Stool letter.

**Q** Would you have asked the same thing or different?

**A** I wouldn't have asked for nearly the price.

**Q** Lynn comes back, it's not sold. What do you do?

**A** . . . I believe it was the next day Don Schmidt knew about it from Lynn or the next day with Lynn's meeting with President Hinckley and that morning I believe I told Don Schmidt that I could obtain complete control over it and would be willing to sell it to the Church for a price. I can't remember, I would get 10 or 15 thousand dollars. Don Schmidt told me that he would check with his superiors.

That same afternoon, in a meeting with Don Schmidt again, he told me that he had talked with G. Homer Durham and I believe higher up, and that they would make that purchase. I told Don Schmidt that I believed that it could be handled confidentially and that Lynn could be sworn to secrecy. I told him that in the morning. Later . . . we had made contact with Steve Christensen and he had agreed to buy it and if, if we wanted to sell it— . . . I believe it was with the statement that if the Church would prefer we could see that it was sold to a faithful member of the Church. If they didn't want—which I spoke very frankly with Don Schmidt about this but I didn't talk to anyone higher up than Don Schmidt. That if the Church was afraid of the publicity of the document now that Lynn knew about it and possibly others, that we could arrange to have it sold to a faithful member who we thought would keep it quiet or handle it the way the Church thought would be appropriate but yet not having the Church officially making decisions.

**Q** Did he get back to you, Schmidt?

**A** After originally it was agreed the Church would make the purchase for the money that I asked, I can't remember the exact sum. But then later . . . in talking with his superiors he told me that they thought it would, it might be more appropriate to have that happen to it as far as a faithful member making the purchase. I told him that I would keep him posted as far as the negotiation with this faithful member.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 471, 473-479)

In his testimony at the preliminary bearing, Lyn Jacobs said that he asked Gordon B. Hinckley to give him a gold coin valued at "60,000 to over 100,000 dollars" in exchange for the letter (see *Tracking the White Salamander*, page 162). When President Hinckley would not agree to that, he suggested a trade for a *Book of Commandments*. This offer was also turned down. Besides the high price which Jacobs asked, the fact that word concerning the 1825 Joseph Smith letter had leaked out may have discouraged Hinckley from trying to suppress

the letter. He undoubtedly reasoned that if the church did purchase the Salamander letter, there would be no way to be certain that Jacobs would not talk about it or retain a photograph. An unsuccessful attempt to suppress the letter, of course, would be more damaging to the church than for the church to buy the letter and publish it to the world. Church leaders apparently did not feel that they could "trust his silence," and it was decided that Steven Christensen, who had a reputation of being friendly to the church leaders, should buy the letter for \$40,000. In 1985 Christensen donated the letter to the Mormon Church.

If the church leaders had actually bought the letter to suppress it, they could have found themselves in a very compromising situation. While Mark Hofmann has testified that he originally created the Salamander letter to sell to the church, before Jacobs was sent to talk to President Hinckley, Hofmann had considered breaking the news about the letter in a major newspaper like the *New York Times*. During this time of uncertainty, Mr. Hofmann allowed H. Michael Marquardt to make a partial typescript of the Salamander letter. Hofmann testified as follows on pages 480-81:

**Q** Did there come a time you actually gave him a transcript of it?

**A** Yes, he made a transcript of it but I can't remember the date when that would have been.

. . . . .

**Q** Was your agreement with Steve Christensen and semi with the Church, something to the effect that, you know, it was going to be, the contents or even the idea that there was a letter would remain private with them?

**A** Yes.

. . . . .

**Q** . . . Did you learn that there was some interest by other people in this?

**A** Let's see. Now I think about it I think I did talk to Marquardt before it was offered to the Church or to Steve Christensen . . .

Mr. Marquardt allowed us to obtain a copy of his extracts from the Salamander letter, and it was these excerpts which were printed in the March 1984 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*. The portions of the letter which Marquardt copied were, in fact, what led us to believe that the letter might be a forgery. As strange as it may seem, our publication of portions of the Salamander letter in March 1984 almost caused a serious altercation with Steven Christensen in federal court (see *Tracking the White Salamander*, page 16). Mr. Christensen was very upset that we had cited anything from the letter and apparently felt that we had obtained the extracts in

an improper way. He, therefore, determined to testify against us in the Ehat suit—the case which we finally won after it was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In reality, Steven Christensen did not have any copyrightable interest in the Salamander letter. Furthermore, as we have shown, the extracts we published were obtained by Michael Marquardt directly from Mark Hofmann before Mr. Christensen purchased the letter. The extracts we printed certainly were not stolen. Although Christensen appeared in court ready to testify against us, the Judge felt this type of testimony was irrelevant to the case at hand and Christensen was unable to testify.

Steven Christensen seems to have been thoroughly converted to the Salamander letter. Instead of listening to the message of caution which we printed in the March 1984 issue of the *Messenger*, he wanted to fight us in court. He continued to believe in Mark Hofmann and his stories concerning the discovery of important Mormon documents for more than a year. Although he seems to have eventually come to the conclusion that Hofmann was involved in illegal activities, by this time it was too late. It was Christensen's continued involvement with Hofmann which finally led to his untimely death.

After the Salamander letter was published in its entirety by the Mormon Church, the news media widely disseminated the story that Joseph Smith was involved in the occult. This publicity disturbed Mormon leaders. Apostle Oaks was very upset about the matter and on August 16, 1985, he accused the news media of "having a field day." Since church leaders were very embarrassed by the publicity concerning the Salamander letter, this set up the climate for one of Hofmann's greatest deceptions—his claim to have the so-called McLellin collection. Hofmann capitalized on the Mormon officials' fear that the embarrassing documents in the McLellin collection would fall into the hands of the enemies of the church. We have already shown that in his confession Mark Hofmann testified that the McLellin collection never really existed. He also gave this testimony:

**Q** Let me ask you this: You say you approached President Hinkley directly. Is this before you were introduced to Pinock by Christensen?

**A** Yes.

.....

**MR. STOTT:** Do you remember when you first talked to President Hinkley about this?

**A** President Hinkley, I told him that a person in Salt Lake had gone in with me on it, had put up the money for it. That I was anticipating being able to come up with the money from another source, which didn't

happen. That this other person was getting anxious to get his money out of it and that I might, and I was feeling him out as far as the possibility of getting money from the Church to make the purchase. We left it, after the meeting, we just left it at the point that if things got real desperate or if I needed to get some money to let him know.

**Q** Was there an idea here conveyed here that the collection would then be sold to the Church or donated to the Church?

**A** The idea was to prevent it from falling in to the enemy's hands.

**Q** What did you tell him about what it contained and what the enemy was doing?

**A** Not too much. How can I put this?

**MR. YENGICH:** Put it honestly.

**A** Well, of course, I basically told him that I could tell him what my fears were concerning its getting in to the enemy's hands, or whatever. And that I would, if he wanted to know, if he asked the questions or whatever, this was a previous technique or thing that we had done. I guess its almost a way of protecting him from knowing something he doesn't want to know. And his interest wasn't so much in having the Church obtain it as having it going someplace where—In fact, I would almost say he almost didn't want the Church to obtain it, he just wanted to make sure it did not fall in to the enemy's, hands which was good since I knew I didn't have it, I knew the Church couldn't obtain it.

.....

**Q** Did you tell him there was controversial items?

**A** Yes.

.....

**Q** Wasn't that a problem that Al Rust was saying that, you know, I understand the Church has it and, of course, the Church knew they didn't have it?

**A** Yes, no, that didn't raise a problem in my mind because I knew that Hinkley knew that I was protecting the collection from Rust and anyone else as far as where it was. He knew I had previously told him that I had the material in a safe deposit box in Salt Lake City and that.

See, Hinkley, his concern was that if this disgruntled investor, he wanted to make sure he didn't reach the point where he would make public or try to obtain the collection. . . .

.....

**Q** What was in your mind. Because you didn't have a collection?

**A** What was in my mind is President Hinkley would be happy if eventually I could tell him that I had seen to it that the document would not fall in to the wrong hands. My speaking with Hinkley, like I said wasn't so much—, see you have to remember that this

was after the time of the Salamander Letter and the Church was a little bit concerned as far as its public relations in what they were obtaining, if they were trying to buy up embarrassing documents or whatever. He wasn't so concerned, especially when he found out other people knew about this material, to actually obtain it, as to just see the right people got it. . . .

. . . .

**Q** The last day or so in June, how many times did you meet with President Hinkley about the McClellin Collection?

**A** Altogether?

. . . .

**Q** . . . in the last week of June?

**A** I would guess three times.

**Q** After meeting with Pinock and up to the bombings, how many times did you meet with President Hinkley about the McClellin Collection?

**A** I believe once or twice/

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 527-529, 531, 533 and 534)

In a Mormon Church press conference, held October 23, 1985, Apostle Dallin Oaks revealed that through the influence of Hugh Pinnock, a General Authority in the Mormon Church, Mark Hofmann obtained a loan for \$185,000 to obtain the McLellin collection:

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

Elder Pinnock asked me if I thought the church would loan Mark Hofmann \$185,000 for this purpose. I said, emphatically not. President Hinckley was in Europe at the time of this conversation. No one else could or would approve such a transaction. . . . We discussed whether the church would be interested in receiving the collection as a gift. It was my judgment that the church probably would at some future time, . . . Elder Pinnock inquired whether it would be appropriate to put him in touch with banking officials. I said I saw no harm in that provided it was clearly understood by all parties that the church was not a party or a guarantor and that Hugh Pinnock was not a party or a guarantor to such a loan. . . . The bank made the loan to Hofmann. . . . The loan came due and it was not paid by Hofmann. . . . Elder Pinnock mentioned at that time that he knew of at least two individuals who might be interested in purchasing the collection. . . .

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

During the press conference, Apostle Oaks was asked the name of the potential buyer, but he refused to reveal his name, stating only that "he is person who is a member of the church" (*Ibid.*). At Hofmann's preliminary hearing, Hugh Pinnock had to reveal that the name of the anonymous buyer was "David Sorenson" and that "He's a mission president in Nova Scotia, Canada" (*Tracking the White Salamander*, page 42). The evidence seems to clearly show that the Mormon leaders were trying to get someone to temporarily keep the collection from falling into the hands of the "enemy" until talk about it died down. Then it could be secretly donated to the church. Steven Christensen, who was to authenticate the collection, became aware that Hofmann was a "crook" and threatened him with the possibility that he would go to jail and never be able to deal with the Mormon Church again. These threats undoubtedly led to Christensen's death.

If church leaders had not continued to engage in secret dealings with Hofmann, they would not find themselves in the embarrassing situation they are in today. Hugh Pinnock claimed that he was not "legally obligated" to repay the bank loan, but he felt morally responsible and paid off the loan with his own money. Apostle Dallin Oaks found himself meeting with Hofmann after the murders:

. . . just before 3 p.m., Mark Hofmann . . . came to my office and said he thought the police would question him. What should he say when they questioned him? And I said, "You should simply tell them the truth. You don't have any reason to believe that this bombing has anything to do with you, do you? And simply tell them the truth." And then, when he seemed to be questioning whether we should tell them about the McLellin collection, I said, "Look. That's been handled on a confidential basis, but there's a murder investigation under way. You should tell the police everything you know and answer every question—and I intend to do the same." (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985)

Apostle Oaks' statement to Hofmann that the McLellin transaction had "been handled on a confidential basis" seems to show that he was involved in trying to keep the material out of the hands of the "enemy."

Long before Dallin Oaks became a General Authority, the Mormon leaders were suppressing documents. For instance, in a book written in 1945, Fawn Brodie revealed:

Joseph F. Smith, Jr., the present historian of the Utah Church, asserted to me in 1943 that a revelation foreshadowing polygamy had been written in 1831, but that it had never been published. In conformity with the church policy, however, he would not permit the manuscript, which he acknowledged to be in possession of the church library, to be examined. (*No Man Knows My History*, page 184, footnote)

Although it was often spoken of by church leaders, this revelation was never revealed to the world until a photocopy leaked out from the Church Historical Department. We were the first to publish it in 1974 (see *Salt Lake City Messenger*, May 1974). The reason it was suppressed was that Joseph Smith recommended that the Mormon elders marry Indians to make their posterity “become white, delightsome and just, . . .” Prior to 1965 the Mormon leaders maintained that Joseph Smith gave only one story of his First Vision. That year, however, it was discovered that he had written an account that had been suppressed which did not include God the Father in the vision. We published this account to the world, and although the church kept silent about the matter for some time, our publication of this “Strange Account” was finally vindicated by a photograph of the document in Brigham Young University Studies (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 145-46). Other examples of important documents which were suppressed by Mormon authorities could be cited, but this should be sufficient to convince the reader that suppression has been a very important principle in the Mormon Church for many years.

Although Dallin Oaks appears to be very indignant that the news media would accuse the Mormon Church of buying up documents to suppress them, he does admit that “the Church closes or restricts access to certain documentary materials” when the donor “has directed that access be restricted or prohibited for a certain period” or when “materials are written or statements are made with the understanding that the communication will not be available to the public for a certain period of time” and then goes on to state: “The laws and ethics of privacy forbid custodians from revealing information that may invade the privacy of living individuals.” Although this might seem quite reasonable, Apostle Oaks carries the matter much further by setting forth a principle which would allow the Mormon Church to suppress any material that would be embarrassing to the church: “In addition, our belief in life after death causes us to extend this principle to respect the privacy of persons who have left mortality but live beyond the veil. Descendants who expect future reunions with deceased ancestors have a continuing interest in their ancestors’ privacy and good name” (“Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents,” page 7). This must have been the rationale that church leaders used when they hid the 1825 letter of Joseph Smith from their own people. They undoubtedly reasoned that since it would hurt Joseph Smith’s “good name” and disturb the Mormon people to have a letter

come to light which revealed his involvement in the occult, it would be best to keep it locked away in a vault. This same type of reasoning could be used to suppress the Bible. Would Noah want his descendants to know that he got drunk on wine, or would Lot want his incest revealed? The same might be said of David’s adultery or the account of Peter denying the Lord.

Instead of upbraiding the news media for accusing the Mormon Church of trying to suppress documents, Apostle Oaks should admit the obvious truth: the suppression of material plays a very important role in the church. During the past few years church leaders have become extremely concerned about embarrassing information leaking out. This has greatly hindered the research of some of the church’s top scholars. Professor Ronald W. Walker, who has been working on a book about President Heber J. Grant, wrote the following: “Because current LDS archival policy limits the access and use of materials, particularly those of the presidents of the church, I have been unable to verify many of my footnote citations” (*Journal of Mormon History*, vol.13, 1986-87, page 38, footnote 1). It is interesting to note that although President Grant has been dead for 42 years, one of the most respected scholars in the church is denied access to his papers.

## REVELATION MISSING

Apostle Dallin Oaks has lambasted the news media for the way they handled the news concerning Hofmann’s discoveries and crimes. He attacked by name the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *London Times*, the *Salt Lake Tribune* and *Time* magazine. He lashed out against the media for “Mormon-bashing,” the use of “speculation and innuendo,” “character assassination,” and “religious prejudice.” He accused the *Los Angeles Times* of “stone-walling,” “perpetrating a coverup” and “concealing the truth from its readers.” He specifically singled out John Dart who interviewed Mark Hofmann on the Oliver Cowdery history and did not later reveal that Hofmann was the source because he had given him a promise of confidentiality. In answer to Dallin Oaks’ charge against Dart and the *Los Angeles Times*, Dawn Tracy reported the following:

*Times* religion writer John Dart said he asked Hofmann repeatedly through his lawyer to be released from his promise, an assertion confirmed by Hofmann’s attorney Bradley Rich.

“Dart was caught in the middle,” said Mr. Rich. “He tried. He really tried.” . . .

Mr. Dart said he believed Hofmann's story because experts had authenticated Hofmann's documents and church leaders themselves were buying them. And in at least one instance, he said, church officials first denied and then admitted to having a Hofmann document: a now-known forged letter that had Smith digging for money. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, August 17, 1987)

While Oaks tries to vilify John Dart and the *Los Angeles Times* for unfair reporting, it should be remembered that Dart was the very first newspaper reporter to write concerning the "Tanners' suggestion of forgery" (*Times*, August 25, 1984). It is also interesting to note that the *Times* for August 8, 1987, revealed that one of the reasons that Mark Hofmann was interviewed concerning the Cowdery History was that "at the time Hofmann was regarded as reliable by top Mormon officials."

It seems that Apostle Oaks is venting his wrath on the news media in an attempt to draw away attention from the mistakes that he and other Mormon leaders made with regard to Mr. Hofmann. He apparently believes that church leaders should not be criticized for their mistakes. In his speech at the "1985 CES Doctrine and Covenants Symposium," delivered just two months before the bombings, Oaks warned:

Criticism is particularly objectionable when it is directed toward Church authorities, general or local. . . . Evil-speaking of the Lord's anointed is in a class by itself. It is one thing to depreciate a person who exercises corporate power or even government power. It is quite another thing to criticize or depreciate a person for the performance of an office to which he or she has been called of God. It does not matter that the criticism is true. . . . David recognized that we are never justified in any gesture or act against the Lord's anointed. . . . The Holy Ghost will not guide or confirm criticism of the Lord's anointed, or of Church leaders, local or general. (pages 24-25)

On August 6, 1987, Apostle Oaks asserted:

We now know that Mark Hofmann was adept at planting lies to discredit the Church and that many organizations and persons have been his witting or unwitting accomplices in that effort. . . . Everyone who believed and repeated his lies and used his forged documents was at best an unwitting servant of his efforts to discredit the Church. ("Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents," pages 15 and 24)

This is certainly a strange statement to be coming from a church official. The church itself printed the text of both the 1825 Joseph Smith letter and the Salamander letter

in its own newspaper, the *Deseret News* (see the Church Section under the dates of April 28 and May 12, 1985). The publication of both of these letters was authorized by the First Presidency of the Mormon Church. Using Dallin Oaks' logic, we would have to conclude that since the church itself printed "his forged documents," it was "at best an unwitting servant of his efforts to discredit" Mormonism. That a church which is supposed to be led by direct revelation from God Himself would be an "unwitting servant" to Mark Hofmann's forgery scheme presents a serious problem to anyone who believes in its divine authenticity.

In his speech, Dallin Oaks spoke of "the caution expressed by Church leaders during a succession of documents discoveries, . . ." Although it is true that by August 16, 1985, Oaks was telling Mormon instructors "to be cautious" about some "newly discovered documents," he turned right around and tried to ease their fears with regard to the contents of the Salamander letter. He claimed that the words "white salamander" could be reconciled with Joseph Smith's statement about the appearance of the Angel Moroni:

Another source of differences in the accounts of different witnesses is the different meanings that different persons attach to words. We have a vivid illustration of this in the recent media excitement about the word "salamander" in a letter Martin Harris is supposed to have sent to W.W. Phelps over 150 years ago. All of the scores of media stories on that subject apparently assume that the author of that letter used the word "salamander" in the modern sense of a "tailed amphibian."

One wonders why so many writers neglected to reveal to their readers that there is another meaning of "salamander," which may even have been the primary meaning in this context in the 1820s. . . . That meaning . . . is "a mythical being thought to be able to live in fire." . . .

A being that is able to live in fire is a good approximation of the description Joseph Smith gave of the Angel Moroni: . . . the use of the words white salamander and old spirit seem understandable.

In view of all this, and as a matter of intellectual evaluation, why all the excitement in the media, and why the apparent hand-wringing among those who profess friendship or membership in the Church? ("1985 CES Doctrine and Covenants Symposium," pages 22-23)

Dallin Oaks' conjecture concerning the real meaning of the word "salamander" certainly shows the lengths Mormon apologists will go to try and explain away anything that challenges Mormonism. Oaks would have us believe that the news media suppressed the true



meaning of the word. Actually, the news media claimed that the context of the letter showed that the “salamander” mentioned there referred to one of the “elemental spirits” of magic. The confession of Mark Hofmann makes it clear that Oaks was way off base and that reporters were right all along. Speaking of the word “salamander,” Hofmann said:

At the time I chose it only because it was commonly used in folk magic. I didn't realize until later all the implications other people would associate with it as far as being able to dwell in fire. (*Hofmann's Confession*, page 441)

While it may be hard for some to understand why Apostle Oaks is so upset with the news media, those who have seriously studied Mormonism know that he is fighting desperately to save the concept that the church is run by revelation. The Apostle Bruce R. McConkie made these claims concerning revelation in the church:

Our Lord's true Church is established and founded upon revelation. Its identity as the true Church continues as long as revelation is received to direct its affairs. . . . without revelation there would be no legal administrators to perform the ordinances of salvation with binding effect on earth and in heaven. . . . Since The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord's true Church; and since the Lord's Church must be guided by continuous revelation if it is to maintain divine approval; . . . we could safely conclude . . . that the Church today is guided by revelation. . . . the Spirit is giving direct and daily revelation to the presiding Brethren in the administration of the affairs of the Church. . . . The presence of revelation in the Church is positive proof that it is the kingdom of God on earth. . . . For those who reject these revelations there awaits the damnation of hell. (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, pages 646, 647 and 650)

Apostle McConkie also stated: “Members of the First Presidency, Council of the Twelve, and the Patriarch to the Church—because they are appointed and sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators to the Church—are known as the living oracles” (*Ibid.*, page 547) Mark Hofmann has put the claim of revelation in the church to the acid test and found that the so-called “living oracles” are just as fallible as other men. Apostle Oaks and the other Mormon leaders find themselves in a very embarrassing position. At a time when revelation was really needed, they seemed to be completely oblivious to what was going on. Not only did they fail to foresee the threat to the church through revelation, but they ignored the many warnings which appeared in the *Salt Lake City Messenger*—a publication which they feel is printed by “apostates” or “anti-Mormons.” Robert Lindsey wrote the following:

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

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

Apostle Dallin Oaks tried to explain the complete failure of the church's revelation system in the following manner:

B. Some have asked, how was Mark Hofmann able to deceive Church leaders?

As everyone now knows, Hofmann succeeded in deceiving many: experienced Church historians, sophisticated collectors, businessmen-investors, a lie detector test and analysis by national experts, and professional document examiners. . . . But why, some still ask, were his deceits not detected by the several Church leaders with whom he met?

In order to perform their personal ministries, Church leaders cannot be suspicious and questioning of each of the hundreds of people they meet each year. Ministers of the gospel function best in an atmosphere of trust and love. In that kind of atmosphere, they fail to detect a few deceivers they meet, but that is the price they pay to increase their effectiveness in counseling, comforting, and blessing the hundreds of honest and sincere people they see. (“Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents,” pages 10-11)

Apostle Oaks has not really answered the question. Mr. Hofmann was not meeting with church leaders for “counseling, comforting, and blessing.” He was meeting with them for the express purpose of deceiving them so that they would give him large amounts of money in exchange for his fraudulent documents. Furthermore, he had many visits with high Mormon officials. These meetings went on for years, yet church leaders 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 redhanded 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)

The Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie claimed that church leaders did have the gift of discernment:

. . . the gift of 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. . . . Where the saints are concerned . . . the Lord expects them to discern, not only between the righteous and the wicked, but between false and true philosophies, educational theories, sciences, political concepts, and social schemes. (*Mormon Doctrine*, page 197)

The Book of Mormon has stories of how the servants of God used the gift of discernment in ancient America. For instance, in the book of Alma we read how Amulek "silenced Zeezrom, for he beheld that Amulek had caught him in his lying and deceiving, . . ." (Alma 12:1). After Zeezrom began to tremble, Amulek informed him concerning the gift of discernment:

Now Zeerom, seeing that thou has been taken in thy lying and craftiness, for thou has not lied unto men only but thou hast lied unto God; for behold, he knows all thy thoughts, and thou seest that thy thoughts are made known unto us by his Spirit.

And thou seest that we know that thy plan was a very subtle plan, as to the subtlety of the devil. . . .

Now when Alma had spoken these words, Zeezrom began to tremble more exceedingly, for he was convinced more and more of the power of God; and he was also convinced that Alma and Amulek had a knowledge of him, for he was convinced that they knew the thoughts and intents of his heart; for power was given unto them that they might know of these things according to the spirit of prophecy. (Alma 12:3, 4 and 7)

In Heleman 9:25-41 we read how a prophet named Nephi revealed by the power of God that Seantum was the one who murdered his brother Seezoram. He told the people that they would "find blood upon the skirts of his cloak." When Seantum was examined it was found that the words which Nephi said "were true" and "he did confess." Some of the people then felt that "Nephi was a prophet" and others said "he is a god, for except he was a god he could not know of all things. For behold, he has told us the thoughts of our hearts, . . . and even he has brought unto our knowledge the true murderer of our chiefjudge."

It is interesting to note that the Prophet Joseph Smith claimed that God Himself warned him of a plan by his enemies to discredit him through forgery. When Smith

was in the process of "translating" the Book of Mormon, he allowed Martin Harris to take the first 116 pages of the manuscript and these pages were lost. The pages were never recovered, but according to Joseph Smith he was warned in a revelation that the pages had been altered by his enemies:

And, behold, Satan hath put it into their hearts to alter the words which you have caused to be written, or which you have translated, . . . I say unto you, that because they have altered the words, they read contrary from that which you translated and caused to be written; . . . on this wise, the devil has sought to lay a cunning plan, that he may destroy this work; . . . I say unto you, that I will not suffer that Satan shall accomplish his evil design in this thing. . . . yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil. (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 10, verses 10-12, 14 and 43)

It would seem that if the same powers were functioning in the church today, the "Prophet, Seer and Revelator" would have received a revelation warning him concerning Mark Hofmann's "cunning plan" to defraud and disgrace the church. Spencer W. Kimball, who was President of the Mormon Church at the time Hofmann first began deceiving church leaders, was supposed to be a "seer" and have the power to "translate all records that are of ancient date" (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 8:13). The Book of Mormon also says:

. . . a seer is greater than a prophet . . . a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have . . . a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, . . . (Mosiah 8:15-17)

When Mark Hofmann brought the Anthon transcript to the church leaders, President Kimball was unable to translate the characters supposed to have been copied from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. Instead of using the "seer stone," he examined the characters which appear on the transcript with a magnifying glass. Not only did he fail to provide a translation, but he was unable to detect that the Church was being set up to be defrauded of a large amount of money and many historical items out of its archives. Moreover, he entirely failed to see the devastating and embarrassing effect this transaction and others which followed would have on the Mormon Church. If ever revelation from the Lord was needed, it was on that day in 1980 when Mark Hofmann stood in the presence of President Kimball.

As President Kimball got older, he became less able to function and President Gordon B. Hinckley took over many of his responsibilities and became to all appearances the acting president of the church. Hinckley, who stood with President Kimball in the 1980 photograph, was deceived on a number of occasions by Mr. Hofmann. He, together with Apostle Boyd K. Packer (also shown in the picture), approved many of the deals the Church made with Hofmann.

It appears that if the Mormon Church was ever led by revelation, it has been lacking since Mark Hofmann came into the Church offices with the Anthon transcript. The inability of the Mormon leaders to detect the religious fraud perpetrated upon them raises the question as to their testimony with regard to the Book of Mormon. After all, if they could not determine that Hofmann's documents—which were only 150 years old—were forgeries, how can we trust their judgment with regard to a record which is supposed to be ten times as old? They have seen and inspected Mark Hofmann's documents, but they have never seen the gold plates the Book of Mormon was translated from. When it comes right down to it, the Book of Mormon reminds us a great deal of Hofmann's documents. It shows signs of plagiarism and has absolutely no provenance. No one ever saw it before it showed up in Joseph Smith's hands, and it was never quoted in any ancient record.

The reader will remember that Apostle McConkie maintained that “the Spirit is giving direct and daily revelation to the presiding Brethren in the administration of the affairs of the Church.” One would think that if such revelation was in operation, Mark Hofmann would have been exposed years before the bombings. With regard to the inability of the Mormon leaders to detect that the Hofmann documents were fraudulent, a person might try to argue that these documents were not really important spiritual writings, and therefore the Lord did not see fit to intervene when the General Authorities examined them. The truth of the matter, however, is that they contain extremely important material directly relating to spiritual affairs. The Salamander letter, for example, changes the story of the Angel Moroni appearing to Joseph Smith to that of a cantankerous and tricky “old spirit” who transforms himself from a white salamander and strikes Joseph Smith. Moreover, some of the purported Joseph Smith writings which Hofmann sold to the Church contain revelations from the Lord Himself. For instance, the Joseph Smith III Blessing document gives this message from the Lord: “Verily, thus saith the Lord: if he abides in me, his days shall be lengthened upon the earth, but, if

he abides not in me, I, the Lord, will receive him, in an instant, unto myself.” The 1838 letter of Joseph Smith to his brother, Hyrum, is in its entirety a revelation purporting to come from the Lord. It begins with the words, “Verily thus saith the Lord,” and ends with the word “Amen.” The fact that the Mormon leaders were unable to recognize the spurious nature of these revelations casts doubt upon their ability to discern the truthfulness of the other revelations given by Joseph Smith. It has always been claimed that it is virtually impossible for a person to write a revelation that would compare with Joseph Smith's. It now appears, however, that there is someone who can write revelations comparable to Joseph Smith's and that it is even possible to get them past the scrutiny of the highest leadership of the Mormon Church.

The more we learn about the scope of Mark Hofmann's subtle plan to deceive the Mormon leaders, the more obvious it becomes that the church is not led by revelation. He, in fact, had church officials so hoodwinked that they allowed him special access to documents that are ordinarily hard to get access to. As early as September 28, 1982, the *Seventh East Press* reported that since the discovery of the Anthon transcript Hofmann has “enjoyed privileged access to otherwise restricted Church archive material, including the First Presidency's vault. One reason for this privileged access, Hofmann thinks, is the fact that ‘I am not a historian. I'm not going to write an expose of Mormonism.’” In his confession Hofmann reveals how Earl Olsen granted him the privilege of looking at a document he seems to have used in writing the Joseph Smith III Blessing. Hofmann claims that Olsen “was saying about how I had done so much for the Church, referring to the Anthon Transcript, that ordinarily he wouldn't do it but he did, . . . (*Hofmann's Confession*, page 141). Mr. Hofmann also testified that he even “saw some materials from the First Presidency's vault . . .” (*Ibid.*, page 453). Hofmann seems to have used his special privileges with regard to church documents to create new forgeries to palm off on unsuspecting church leaders. It would be hard to conceive of a more pernicious scheme. That the Mormon leaders were unable to detect his iniquity even though they met with him from 1980 to 1985 seems to completely destroy their claim to special revelation. Mr. Hofmann believed that his “discoveries” would tend to liberalize the Mormon Church as scholars and church leaders came to accept them, and there is little doubt that this has turned out to be the case. Now that the documents have been exposed as forgeries, historians have suffered some loss of credibility with the average member of the church. This would probably tend to greatly strengthen the

orthodox position in the church if it were not for another factor—i.e., the loss of credibility that the Mormon leaders have suffered. It is possible, in fact, that the exposure of Hofmann's documents as forgeries could do more harm to the Church in the long run than if the documents were proven authentic.

Although Apostle Dallin Oaks would have us believe that "Criticism is particularly objectionable when it is directed toward Church authorities," there seems to be no way to get around the fact that they must bear a great deal of the responsibility in the Hofmann affair. If they had been open and forthright about historical documents, Mr. Hofmann would not have approached them with his blackmail-like documents with the idea of obtaining large amounts of money. That Mark Hofmann knew they were suppressing important church documents and were anxious to keep anything embarrassing from falling into the hands of church critics set the stage for the tragic events which followed. While Mormon scholars have been blamed for not being more careful, it is the General Authorities of the church who are primarily responsible. For the most part Mormon scholars want an open history and would not have an interest in buying up documents to hide them. We feel that the scholars were honestly trying to learn the truth about the documents. They made no special claims of infallibility. The church leaders, on the other hand, who claimed to have special powers of revelation, played into Hofmann's hands time after time. It appears, in fact, that if it had not been for the suppressive policy of the church, its leaders could have brought Mr. Hofmann's career to an end long before the bombings. Fourteen months before the murders we had noted that while Mark Hofmann said that he had obtained the Joseph Smith III Blessing from a descendant of Thomas Bullock, the name of this descendant had not been released to the public (see *The Money-Digging Letters*, pages 8-9). We noted also that "it is very important that historians know the source of these finds," and related that RLDS Church Historian Richard P. Howard told us that "when he asked Hofmann the specific source of this document, he would not reveal it." He was, however, given a name by church officials, "but never followed up on the matter because he was told it could prove embarrassing for the Mormon Church. The reason why it would prove embarrassing was not explained." On August 23, 1984, Mark Hofmann explained to us why it would be embarrassing for the church. On October 24, 1984, we published his explanation in the second printing of *The Money-Digging Letters*, page 10:

. . . Hofmann indicated that he had given the Mormon Church an affidavit which stated where he had obtained it. He could not reveal the source to the public,

however, because the member of the Bullock family from whom he had purchased the document also had important papers concerning Brigham Young's finances that would be embarrassing to the Church.

At Mark Hofmann's preliminary hearing, former Church Archivist Donald Schmidt testified that Hofmann had indeed given the church "a notarized" statement signed "by an Allen Bullock" stating that Hofmann had obtained the Blessing Document from him. Hofmann also informed Schmidt that "his full name was Allen Lee Bullock" and that he was born in "1918." When Schmidt was asked if he had any personal contact with Allen Lee Bullock, he replied: "I did not." He also testified that no one in his department had any contact with him and that the provenance of the document had never been checked out.

In his confession, Mark Hofmann testified that he had found a notary who did not require identification and that he himself had forged the affidavit:

Q Was it signed in front of him?

A Yes, I signed it right there.

Q You signed it?

A I signed Alan Bullock's name.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, page 170)

Investigators learned that the name Allen Lee Bullock actually came from a genealogical record of the Bullock family, but Mr. Bullock had not signed the document. In fact, he never had the Blessing Document and had never even met Mark Hofmann. We suspect that Hofmann must have told church officials that he might be able to obtain the embarrassing records concerning Brigham Young for the church from Allen Lee Bullock if they did not bother Mr. Bullock. The reason that church officials asked RLDS Church Historian Richard Howard not to contact Bullock must have been that they wanted to keep these records suppressed from the public. If church leaders had not continued to suppress the name Allen Lee Bullock, we would have been able to contact him a year before the bombings and discover that the affidavit attributed to him was a forgery. This, of course, would have been the type of hard evidence we were looking for which could have led to Hofmann's arrest and conviction for forgery. If this had occurred, there would have been no McLellan deception, Hugh Pinnock would never have helped Hofmann obtain the loan for \$185,000 and Steven Christensen and Kathleen Sheets would probably be alive today. This whole series of tragic events seems to destroy the claim that the Mormon Church is led by revelation. It appears, in fact, that church leaders are more concerned about protecting the image of the church than they are about being forthright with their people.

## THE MURDERS

As we indicated earlier, the Salt Lake County Attorney's Office terminated the discussions with Mark Hofmann when Mr. Hofmann refused to talk if Detective Jim Bell was going to be present. While this is disappointing, the confession which has been released contains a summary of what Hofmann told prosecutors before the plea bargain was finalized. We quote the following from that supplement to the transcripts:

Mark Hofmann . . . said he was extremely knowledgeable in the manufacture of black gunpowder.

...

A few months before the October bombings, Hofmann asked Shannon Flynn, a friend, to obtain some blasting caps for him. Hofmann wanted to make a bomb out of nitrate fertilizer and diesel oil. . . . Hofmann threw them away sometime before October, 1985 . . .

Hofmann didn't remember for sure, but thought that he might have purchased some books on bombs at a gun show that he and Flynn had attended. The idea for the nails packed around the Christensen bomb came from one of the books. Its purpose was to increase the possibility of death. . . .

Mark Hofmann then related the following information about the bombings of October 15 and 16, 1985: He knew he was going to make two bombs to kill two people, but at first he wasn't sure who the victims would be. . . . First he thought that one of the bombs would kill either Thomas Wilding or Brent Ashworth and the second bomb would kill himself. Then he thought that possibly the bombs should be for Steve Christensen and Thomas Wilding, and finally he thought about killing Thomas Wilding and Brent Ashworth with the two bombs. Hofmann stated that it wasn't until the morning of the 15th of October when he made the bombs that he settled on the actual targets.

On October 5th he made two trips to the Radio Shack at the Cottonwood Mall. On the first trip, he purchased a mercury switch and a D size battery pack. . . . With each visit to Radio Shack, he used the name Mike Hansen. Hofmann thought that he had used the alias "Mike Hansen" as early as 1978. . . . He used the alias in 1979 at the University of Utah Special Collections Library. He also used it at the LDS Church Archives, the Utah State University Archives Special Collections, and the New York Public Library. . . . In Utah he used it at Debouzek, Utah Engraving, Salt Lake Stamp, and at BYU . . .

The end pipe caps, nails and gunpowder were purchased at Allied . . .

After purchasing the bomb components, Hofmann returned home and placed the materials on a blanket in his downstairs den. This was the same room in which he performed his forgery work. . . .

On October 10, 1985, Hofmann went to an area . . . near Grantsville to test fire the bomb components . . . He wasn't able to perform the test because... there was too much snow and mud. . . . October 11, he returned to test once more. Into a 1/2 inch pipe . . . he placed gunpowder and a rocket igniter. He connected the wire of the rocket igniter to a 50 foot extension cord, walked back to a small gully, and connected the extension cord to a battery pack. The bomb exploded. He then knew if he were to make a bomb of twice that size he would be able to kill someone with it. . . . on October 11, 1985, he felt that it was still going to be Thomas Wilding. Hofmann said he wanted to kill him . . .

On . . . October 14, Hofmann . . . visited with his wife for a little while and then she went to bed. He went into his downstairs room and constructed the bombs. . . . It didn't take long, probably 2 hours or less to construct the two bombs. . . . He made small holes in the boxes with an ice pick. He threaded the wires from the pipe bombs through the holes and taped them separately onto the outside of the box. When he delivered the bombs, he took the tape off the wires and connected them. Then, if the packages were tipped, the mercury in the switch would complete the circuit and the bombs would explode. . . .

He finished the assembling of the bomb packages by writing the names Steve Christensen and Gary Sheets on the packages. He didn't know Sheets address so he looked it up in the phone directory. He underlined Sheets' address in the directory with the same magic marker that he used to write the names on the boxes. . . .

Hofmann stated that it was while constructing the bombs that he finally decided for whom the bombs were intended. He said he wasn't rational at the time, but decided that Steve Christensen would have to be killed so that the McLellin transaction would not take place. . . . The second bomb, with the name Gary Sheets on it, was simply a diversion so that everyone would believe the bombings were the result of CFS business problems.

Hofmann said the thing that attracted him to bombs as a means of killing was that he didn't have to be there at the time of the killings. He didn't think he could pull the trigger on someone if he faced them, but he could do it if he didn't have to be around. . . .

Sometime after 2:45 a.m., Hofmann placed the two bombs and two bags into his van and left for the Sheets' residence. . . . He placed the bomb about five feet from the garage door thinking that a car leaving the area would hit it. . . .

Hofmann returned to his house around 3:30 a.m. While he was still downstairs his daughter awoke. His wife, who was upstairs, asked him to take care of the little girl, . . .

Sometime between 6:00 and 6:30 a.m. that morning he went to the Judge Building to deliver the second bomb. . . . He got into the elevator with Hal Passey and Hal's father. . . . He walked directly to Steve Christensen's office and placed the bomb package inside the door jam. . . .

Hofmann said the third bomb, the one on October 16, 1985 that exploded in his car, was a suicide attempt. He said he was distraught over the killings the day before. He thought that he deserved death, and it would be the best thing for his family. He also admitted that he had placed a number of inconsequential papers in the car so that people would think that the McLellin Collection, which did not exist, was blown up in the explosion and fire.

On the 16th of October, Hofmann went to Logan to purchase the bomb parts for the third bomb. Hofmann used the name Bill Edwards at Radio Shack in Logan. . . . Hofmann then went up into Logan Canyon and prepared the bomb. . . . He then drove down to Salt Lake, . . . The bomb was in a paper sack on the passenger seat. He put it on the driver's seat, touched the two wires together, and the bomb exploded. (*Hofmann's Confession*, pages SS-1-12)

Those who are interested in this subject will probably want to read the entire account in our photographic printing of the confession. In the transcript itself, Hofmann does make some comments concerning the murders. On pages 279-280, we find the following:

**Q** . . . if the American Antiquarian Society had been able to and did vote to purchase your Oath on October 15, 1985 for about a million dollars, what would that have done to the financial hole that you dug yourself into by that time?

**A** It would have relieved me from it. Hence, I guess you want me to say the bombings would not have taken place.

**Q** I don't want you to say that unless it is true.

**A** I'll say it since its true.

On page 411 of the transcripts Mark Hofmann said that he would later talk of his "rationalization for the homicides." Further on in the transcript Mr. Hofmann admitted he made the bombs. His statements seem to agree with the summary of earlier interviews with him:

**A** Yes, well again this gets into rationalization for the bombs. All along, of course, until the evening that I made them, I didn't really think that I would end up using them. At least to take a life.

**MR. BIGGS:** Why is that?

**A** My rationalization was that I would prepare myself or have that at my disposal but that things would work out. Now, remember, I think we went in to this before, that my thinking was at that time that my life would be taken. In other words, that it would be a suicide attempt. Although, like I say, it was half a joke. Well, joke is not a good word, but it was more thinking that I have the parts, more of a way out, than actually saying to myself when I purchased the parts, this is what I'm going to use them for, these are the people I'm going to take out. None of that was in my mind at that time. As far as the idea of Mrs. Sheets, it hadn't even entered my mind yet. Who was going to be taken out with me was up in the air, if anyone was to be. (*Hofmann's Confession*, page 424)

According to an article by Dawn Tracy, Mark Hofmann may have been thinking of murder at least five months prior to the killings:

And a longtime boyhood friend has told The Tribune that Hofmann discussed ways of killing people with him five months before the bombing deaths . . .

The friend said the two talked about circumstances that would induce someone to kill. . . . Hofmann and his friend then discussed different ways of killing; using a shotgun because Hofmann believed it would be impossible to trace, or planting bombs, according to the friend. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, March 21, 1987)

It now appears that anyone who posed a threat to Mr. Hofmann's Mormon document empire may have been in danger of being put to death. Since we had been publishing material which was very critical of Hofmann's "discoveries" for nineteen months prior to the bombings and publicly calling for people to tell us anything they might know about his dealings, we feel very fortunate to be alive. We had two face to face confrontations with Mr. Hofmann regarding his documents. The first was on August 22, 1984, when he came to our home and talked with Sandra. He seemed very distressed and hurt that we, of all people, would question his discoveries. He had expected that opposition might come from those in the church, but he was shocked that Utah Lighthouse Ministry had taken a position which was critical of his documents. Mr. Hofmann appeared to be almost to the point of tears as he pled his case as to why we should trust him.

In the year that followed we continued to publish material that was critical of Hofmann's discoveries, and finally on August 24, 1985, we confronted him at the Sunstone Symposium. At that time we questioned him closely with regard to the origin of the Salamander letter. Unfortunately, his answers did not seem to square with the facts we already knew and it must have become obvious to him that we did not believe what he was saying. At one point, he had a very sad and worried expression on his face. He seemed deeply troubled. It was almost as if he were trying to say, "Please believe what I am telling you." Although Mr. Hofmann did not outwardly show any hostility, this was a very tense and unpleasant experience for all of us. We knew, of course, that whenever someone attempts to uncover fraud there is some danger of retaliation, but we never thought of Mark Hofmann as being a violent man. After the murders we felt very thankful that Mr. Hofmann was not triggered by the exposes we published concerning his document deals. We were very fortunate that Mr. Hofmann arrived at our house armed only with arguments as to why we should trust his documents rather than a pipe bomb surrounded with nails. While we have always thought there was a possibility of being assassinated by someone opposed to our work, we never even considered that a well-mannered man like Mark Hofmann, who professed to be friendly to our work, would turn out to be a cold-blooded killer who would stop at nothing to shut the mouths of his opponents.

## RESEARCH VINDICATED

There has been quite a bit of criticism with regard to Mark Hofmann's confession, and many people wonder if he has told us the truth. One defect, as we have already mentioned, is that it does not tell us enough about the murders. While we wish that Mr. Hofmann had revealed more, we can understand his reluctance. Talking about forgery is entirely different than talking about murder. Very few people would want to have their confession to such gruesome crimes published to the world. In a normal case a murderer is not required to make a public confession of the details of the crime. At one time we were doing research with regard to a man who had committed murder and had entered into a plea bargain agreement. We discovered that there was no public record available detailing the crime. Mr. Hofmann, as we have shown in the March 1987 issue of the *Messenger*, did go into court and admitted he had committed the murders. Fortunately, the news media were present to record his confession of guilt. In addition, we have a few statements by Hofmann himself in the transcripts and the prosecutors' summary of what went on at earlier meetings. While we would really like to have hundreds of pages of testimony on the bombings, we do feel fortunate to have what we do.

There is another defect in the transcripts that does disturb us. We had told prosecutors that in order to really convince the public that Mark Hofmann was acting alone in the forgeries, they needed to have him write out a sample of all the different styles of writing found in the forgeries.

His known handwriting does not appear to be very good. If he could not match the quality found in the forgeries, we would know that he was not the master forger and that there was a co-conspirator or co-conspirators, which, of course, could even raise questions concerning the murders. It has been claimed that Mark Hofmann did write some samples for investigators and that these samples did satisfy them that he was, in fact, the only one involved in the forgeries which have been charged. Unfortunately, however, these samples were not published with the transcripts, and, strange as it may seem, it was claimed that Hofmann's attorney had possession of them. We feel that prosecutors need to publish handwritten samples so that people can make their own decision. Although we have no reason to distrust Hofmann's attorney, it would be better if new samples were taken in the presence of witnesses so that we would know beyond a shadow of a doubt that they had come from Hofmann's own hand. Furthermore, they should be submitted to noted handwriting experts to verify that all the forgeries were written by Hofmann himself. Until this is done, we cannot be absolutely certain that there were no co-conspirators.

Other than this problem and the lack of material on the murders, we are very impressed with the transcripts. In our wildest imagination we could never have dreamed that Mark Hofmann would make such a detailed confession. For instance, he certainly did not have to tell his true feelings concerning Mormonism, yet he has freely admitted his complete unbelief in the system. From our own investigation into Hofmann's activities we know that many of the facts he relates are true. In almost every respect he has vindicated the work which we have done on his forgeries during the last three and a half years. Even though we knew that we had good solid evidence, we felt that it was rather daring to publish the book, *Tracking the White Salamander*, before the case came to trial. If Mr. Hofmann had stone-walled and refused to confess his guilt, we would have had a difficult time convincing some people that the theories published in that book were correct. As it is, however, Mr. Hofmann has confirmed our research. He not only admits that our theory concerning the origin of the Salamander letter is correct, but also that we gave correct sources for the Joseph Smith III Blessing and the Lucy Smith letter. Furthermore, although he refused to discuss the 1873 Martin Harris letter because it was not on the list of items he was charged with forging, the statements he made concerning Walter Conrad, the man who was supposed to receive Harris' letter, definitely show that the letter is a forgery—something we have tried to prove since 1984.

We do not claim that *Tracking the White Salamander* will turn out to be the best book on Mark Hofmann. There are, in fact, a number of authors who are far better writers than we could ever hope to be who are working on the subject. We seriously doubt, however, that any major study of Hofmann will be available this year. One of the books probably will not appear in print for at least two or three years. In a review of our book, published in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 15, 1987, Harold Schindler wrote: "As for

*Tracking the White Salamander*, what Jerald Tanner lacks in writing skills, he makes up for with his close and personal knowledge of many of the principals in this intriguing game of history-mystery." *Tracking the White Salamander* has 185 pages of fascinating material concerning the crimes which rocked the State of Utah. It is a must for all those who desire to have a good understanding of Mark Hofmann's confession. It not only has important information obtained from Mark Hofmann's associates but it also contains lengthy extracts from the preliminary hearing. This testimony alone is worth the price of the book.

Our work with regard to Mormon history has been very difficult since we discovered problems in the Salamander letter. We really want to thank those who have prayed for us during this critical time in our ministry. Since the Hofmann affair has opened up many doors to the Mormon people, we continue to need a great deal of prayer. We especially need prayer that we will be faithful to our ministry and that God will bring many to Himself.

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## DEVILS ALL OVER?

In the March 1987 issue of the *Messenger*, we warned that some critics of the Mormon Church have become so obsessed with finding "Luciferian" influence in the temple ceremony that they have lost sight of reality. Since we published that article, things have gone from bad to worse. In a speech given in Salt Lake City on June 29, 1987, Ed Decker discussed the spires on Mormon temples. He charged that "these spires represent something that is so sinister that it makes your flesh crawl when you think about it. . . . they represent an up-side-down nail pointing defiantly toward heaven, as if to impale the Lord Jesus Christ anew when he comes in the clouds. . . . Satan's spires now rise up from almost every town in the country on LDS chapels . . ." Mr. Decker claimed that at the Capstone Conference new

revelations would be forthcoming which "will blow your socks off." At that conference, William J. Schnoebelen took up where Decker left off. He claimed that "the trapezoidal shape" of the spires on the Salt Lake temple "draw demons like fly paper." He went on to say: "Now, we are going to attempt to prove that the Salt Lake Temple is, in fact, a perfectly designed habitation of devils, just like is mentioned in the book of Revelations." In 1985 Mr. Schnoebelen published a booklet entitled, *Joseph Smith and the Temple of Doom*. Much of this same information has recently been printed under the title, *Mormonism's Temple of Doom*. Unfortunately this work is marred by an excessive zeal to link Mormonism to witchcraft. Mr. Schnoebelen seems to have been deeply involved in the occult and claims that he has portions of ceremonies used in witchcraft which bear some remarkable parallels to the Mormon temple ceremony. His most startling examples, however, are only preserved by photocopies of typewritten documents which could not possibly be very old. Our preliminary study of the material leads us to conclude that it is far more likely that portions of the Mormon temple ritual were plagiarized and incorporated into witchcraft ceremonies rather than the other way around. We are planning to publish some evidence concerning this matter and would appreciate any insights that our readers may have.

A cassette tape Jerald recently recorded deals with the danger of going too far in trying to link Mormonism to Satanism. It also deals with questionable methods used by some critics of the church which are tending to harden the hearts of the Mormon people against Christians who are working among them. It is basically a call for a more loving approach to the Mormons. This tape is entitled, *Problems in Winning Mormons*, and is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry.

We are also pleased to announce that *Jerald Tanner's Testimony*, which was previously available only on cassette tapes, has been printed and is now available.

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