

Church Releases Statement on Mark Hofmann Interviews

The following statement was issued 31 July 1987 by the First Presidency and read by Richard P. Lindsay, managing director of the Church Public Communications Department:

“On behalf of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we express again our heartfelt sympathy to the families and associates of those who have been affected by the bombings and related events of the past months. We deeply regret the terrible personal tragedies visited upon so many.

“We are grateful that through the exhaustive professional efforts of law enforcement and judicial personnel the terrible crimes which have concerned this community have been solved. Mark W. Hofmann has confessed to murdering two innocent people in an effort to prevent discovery of his systematic forging and counterfeiting of historic documents. Hofmann has confessed guilt to every charge brought against him for forgery or counterfeiting of documents relating to the Church and acknowledges that other documents for which he was the source are also counterfeit.

“From the day of its organization, April 6, 1830, the Church has pursued a divine mandate to record, acquire, and preserve documents and artifacts considered to be of importance to its history and the times and environment in which it developed.

“Like other document collectors throughout the nation, the Church has followed time-honored professional practices and relied on competent authorities in document acquisition and with others has been a victim of the deceit and duplicity which Hofmann has acknowledged.

“We are often asked, ‘Have these document scandals “rocked the foundations” of the Church?’ as some writers have trumpeted. Of course they have not. Now that we know the truth about these documents, the events of the last two years have in no way undermined the traditional history of the Church.

“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is in good health, robust, and growing ever stronger in its mission. From a modest beginning 157 years ago, the Church has grown in a remarkable fashion as men and women in many lands have embraced the doctrine of Jesus Christ and entered the waters of baptism.

“Much of the commentary elicited by the fraudulent documents reflected the views of those who would have the world believe that there is no real substance to the miraculous events from which The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints emerged.

“Such commentary also has largely ignored the Church’s earlier caution that the authenticity of the documents was yet to be confirmed. We now know from the Salt Lake County Attorney

interviews released today that all of the documents of major public interest linked to Mark Hofmann were products of his fraud, forgery, and counterfeiting.

“The Church, its early leaders, its doctrine, and its members have been unjustly demeaned by Hofmann’s actions and by much of the extensive commentary about the meaning and impact of documents now acknowledged as counterfeits.

“These recent tragic experiences strongly reaffirm that any accurate, objective history or commentary on the Church requires an understanding of the spiritual powers attending this divine work.

“As one of the aggrieved parties in this tragic episode of murder and forgery, representatives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as were others, were briefed Thursday, July 30, by Salt Lake County Attorney David E. Yocom and Deputy Salt Lake County Attorneys Robert L. Stott and David C. Biggs on their interviews of Mark W. Hofmann. Obviously much more time will be needed to make a detailed study of the lengthy transcription of the interviews.

“Further response from the Church on these matters will be given by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve, next Thursday, August 6, at a Brigham Young University symposium on ‘Church History and Recent Forgeries.’ Elder Oaks will join scholars, legal authorities, and historians, including members and non-members of the Church, in an examination of these tragic events and their impact on scholarship, history, the public, the news media, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

(See Speaking Today: “Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents,” by Elder Dallin H. Oaks, page 63 this issue.)