

The Mark Hofmann Forgeries Fooled Mormon Leaders in 1980 - There was no Inspiration. As a result, several innocent people died.

Recovery from Mormonism (RfM) discussion forum.

Recovery Board : RfM

How Oaks and FARMS Made a Mad Rush to Save the Holy White Salamander

Posted by: **steve benson** ()

Date: March 04, 2015 05:27PM

If, in fact, the Book of Mormon gold plates were delivered to Joseph Smith not by an angel but by a white salamander (as Mark Hofmann's eventually exposed. forged Martin Harris letter claimed), then, back when that news broke, the Mormon Church had some big-time explainin' to do.

By the way, here's that magic moment, caught forever on Candid Cult Camera:

<https://defendingcontending.com/2011/01/14/mark-hofmanns-parole-board-letter-released/>

In the meantime, never fear, Dallin H. Hoax and Fantasizing FARMS are here.

Oakster the Hoaxster

In the midst of the salamander-story outbreak that was wilding spreading because of the discovery"of the so-called "Salamander Letter," Oaks as trying to reassure Mormon Church religion instructors at a BYU symposium that it actually all fit quite nicely with the Book of Mormon tail, er, tale. Oaks declared:

"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? . . .

"As members of the Church, we have the gift of the Holy Ghost. If we will use our spiritual POWERS of DISCERNMENT, WE WILL NOT BE MISLED by the lies and half-truths Satan will circulate in his attempts to deceive us and to thwart the work of God."

**NOTE: Oaks' above defense of the White Salamander has since been expunged from Mormon Church websites:

"The link on the LDS Church website [to Oaks' BYU religion symposium talk defending the notion of actual white salamanders that live in fire} was [<http://ldscs.org/general%20authority%20talks/dho.reading%20church%20history.1985.pdf>] and I didn't capture the URL to this address from the BYU website before this address was removed (this address was given at BYU which is why it was posted on both websites)."

("Who is Mark Hofmann? The Truth Behind the Salamander Letter Bombings (Part 2)," on "Mormon Exositoer," at: <http://mormonexpositor.com/38-who-is-mark-hofmann-the-truth-behind-the-salamander-letter-bombings-part-2/>)

Another examination of the desperately-dictated disappearance of Oaks' rush to reinforce the Gospel of White Salamanderism:

"This is the address [by Oaks] in which the LDS Church General Authorities were just beginning their rewrite and revisioning of LDS theology and doctrine based on the White Salamander letter (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salamander_letter)

"The fact the GA was doing 'damage control' by integrating the White Salamander into the Joseph Smith story and early Mormon history was evident by comments like these in Oaks address:

"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: . . . [T]he 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?"

(Why Has LDS Apostle Dallin Oaks' 8/16/85 Address, "Reading Church History." Been Removed from Both the LDS Church and BYU Websites?," by "Mister IT is trying to Liahona outta here," 30 January 2010, at: http://www.answerbag.com/q_view/1906788)

Below are references to Oaks' defense of the salamander hoax: Dallin H. Oaks, "Reading Church History," talked delivered at "CES [Church Education System) Symposium on the Doctrine and Covenants and Church History," 16 August 1985, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; see also, "Meet Mark Hofmann: Here's a Brief Introduction to the Man Who Fooled God!," at: <http://www.mormoninformation.com/hofmann.htm>)

What follows are examples of the hilarious attempts by that imaginary "research wing" of the Mormon Church (FARMS) to, at all costs, sanctify the Salamander for Smith and his Saints. The really pathetic part of all this is that FARMS actually believed Hofmann's forgery was, like, true. Seriously. Obviously, their Holy Ghost was on an extended vacation.

--The Text of the "Salamander Letter"

A brief review is first in order of relevant portions of Hofmann's phony "White Salamander" letter--supposedly written by Martin Harris to W. W. Phelps--and which served for a time to snooker the Lord's "prophets, seers and revelators":

"Palmyra Oct 23rd 1830

"Dear Sir

". . . Joseph Smith Jr. first come to my notice in the year 1824 in the summer of that year I contracted with his father to build a fence on my property . . . [Smith's father] . . . says Joseph can see any thing he wishes by looking at a stone Joseph often sees Spirits here with great kettles of coin money it was Spirits who brought up rock because Joseph made no attempt on their money I later dream I converse with spirits which let me count their money when I awake I have in my hand a dollar coin which I take for a sign Joseph describes what I seen in every particular says he the spirits are greived so I through back the dollar In the fall of the year 1827 I hear Joseph found a gold bible I take Joseph aside & he says it is true I found it 4 years ago with my stone but only just got it because of the enchantment the old spirit come to me 3 times in the same dream & says dig up the gold but when I take it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole and struck me 3 times & held the treasure & would not let me have it because I lay it down Joseph says when can I have it the spirit says one year from today if you obey me look to the stone after a few days he looks the spirit says bring your brother Alvin Joseph says he is dead shall I bring what remains but the spirit is gone Joseph looks but can not see who to bring the spirit says you did not bring your brother you can not have it look to the stone Joseph looks but can not see who to bring the spirit says I tricked you again look to the stone Joseph looks & sees his wife on the 22nd day of Sept 1827 they get the gold bible--" (1)

--To Arms! To Arms! Calling the Boys at FARMS

Oh, my heck!

How to dig the Mormon Cult out of this one--especially in light of the faith-promoting yarn that Joseph Smith got the gold plates from a Book of Mormon prophet-warrior-turned-angel-named-Moroni--not from some flaming toad?

Specializing in the art of the absurd, the FARMS manure ministry of LDS, Inc. offered (with all the due diligence and seriousness that they could bring to bear in their secret underwear) a bizarre hodgepodge of "explanations" as to why Joseph Smith may have really and truly encountered not the Angel Moroni but, rather, a Celestial Salamander.

FARMS did so in a phony-baloney document of its own, entitled "Moses, Moroni and the

Salamander," published in completely and deadly seriousness in June 1985. (2)

It stands as the Keystone Cops of their religion--a burning testimony, if you will, of the lengths to which Mormon apologists are willing to go in proving just what toadies they, too, can be.

--Researching Righteous Reptiles

Let the FARMS spin begin:

"Martin Harris's letter of 23 October 1830 to Wm. W. Phelps (published in 'Church News,' 28 April 1985) has dismayed some people. . . .

"We may never know whether this description was an embellishment on the part of Harris, or an allegory employed by Joseph Smith, or whether Moroni somehow chose to appear to Joseph out of, or in the form of, a salamander. But since Phelps joined the Church after reading Harris' letter, he must not have found the allusion to a salamander very disconcerting.

"In fact, as new research is showing, the salamander has been thought for millennia to have supernatural and extraordinary powers." (3)

--Not to Worry: People Actually Once Thought Salamanders Lived in Fire.

The FARMS crew then offered the following "facts" to the faithful:

"Well into the 19th century, it was commonly believed that salamanders 'lived in, or were able to endure, fire.' . . . Long before, even Aristotle--of all people--reported [that the] '. . . salamander shows that certain animals are naturally proof against fires, for it is said to extinguish a flame by passing through it.' . . ." (4)

--Fanning the Flames: The Birthplace of the Salamander

FARMS' faithfully-fabulous fiction continued:

". . . [S]alamanders were thought to be 'generated in fire.' The great Rabbi Akiba held to this view . . . Other rabbis, including the noted Rashi, debated whether the fire had to be heated for seven days, seven years or seventy years to produce a salamander that would appear walking and flying in the midst of the fire. . . ." (5)

--I See Salamander Spirits

It got even better:

". . . [S]alamanders were often associated with spirits. In Germany, salamanders were thought to be . . . weather-prophets . . . and house-protector spirits. . . . In the Middle Ages, the salamander denoted 'a being possessing the shape of a man, whose element was the fire, or who at least could live in that element. . . . Earth, air, fire and water, each had a spirit--for fire, it was the salamander.'" (6)

--The Still Small Salamander's Voice to Earth: This Is God Calling

Please, tell us more:

". . . [S]alamanders were associated with the voice of God and with the Holy Ghost! . . . [W]e find that the rabbis of the 9th Century A.D. and before believed that . . .

"[O]ne of these things God showed Moses on Mt. Sinai was the salamander . . . ' In 1841, the baptistry of Winchester Cathedral in England bore the figure of a salamander, alluding to the words, 'He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.' . . ." (7)

--Salamander Garments as Fire Insurance

Can you feel the burning in the bosom?:

"Since the salamander was said to endure fire, it was thought to protect others against burning, including hell-fire. The rabbis remarked that hell could not harm scribes . . . [and] flames cannot hurt one who is anointed with salamander blood . . . ' A similar

popular belief seems to stand behind Austrian lore relating the salamander to the atoning suffering of Christ. The Zohar . . . mentions protective garments of salamander skin." (8)

--Holy Flying Toad, Batman! You Mean Jesus Was a Salamander?

Now the FARMS fantastic voyage really took off:

"Not far removed from these ideas . . . are [those] depicted by the biblical phrase 'fiery flying serpents.' Were they 'salamanders'? A brass model of this reptile symbolized Jesus himself, who commanded Moses to put it up on a pole, so the people who had been bitten could look to it and live" (9)

--Behold, I Am the Resurrection and the Salamander

As man is now, God once was; As God is now, man may likewise become a salamander:

"Eternal life and resurrection were also symbolized by the salamander. The Arabic word for both the salamander and the phoenix, which could die and rise again out of its own ashes, was samandal. . . ." (10)

--Remember, People Are Salamanders, Too

FARMS then tried to give salamanders a human face:

"People too were sometimes called salamanders. Shakespeare calls a fiery-red face a 'salamander.' . . .

"[S]oldiers who courageously exposed themselves to fire in battle [were also called salamanders]. Thomas Brooks in 1670 wrote, 'God's people are true salamanders, that live best in the fire of afflictions.' . . ." (11)

--The Good, the Bad and the Salamanders

FARMS nevertheless then cautioned against reckless trusting of toads:

"Not all salamanders were good, however. The ['spectacularly colored'] poisonous ones . . . were linked with evil spirits. But the non-poisonous good ones were white or grey-brown." (12)

--I Saw A Salamander Flying in the Midst of Heaven

FARMS finally tried to make a purse out of an amphibian's ear, in a valiant flame-out attempt to throw a positive light on the notion of heavenly messengers descending to Earth as Kolobitic reptilians bringing tidings of great joy:

"Some of us may wince at the suggestion that an angel of God should be associated with, or described as, a salamander.

"But to people then, no image or description would better fit the appearance of a brilliant white spiritual being, once a valiant soldier, now dwelling in a blazing pillar of light, shockingly pure and glorious, speaking with the voice of God while flying through the midst of Heaven, than the salamander! Moroni should be flattered. . . ." (13)

--Spinning for Salamanders: Stay Tuned, There's More to Come

FARMS researchers promised even more exciting discoveries:

"Further research is underway. . . . In the end, [it] may lead to a less 'modern' view of many symbolically meaningful events: a burning bush; a talking ass; a flaming sword; a tempting snake; the Lord with seven horns and seven eyes; a descending dove; and a salamandrine angel." (14)

--I Would Like to Bury You, My Salamander

What a beautiful thing the Mormon gospel is.

And, now, thanks to this kind of restoration research, so much more believable, too!

--Endnotes

(1) "Typescript of Letter of Martin Harris to William W. Phelps, 23 October 1830," Attachment 1, in "Preliminary Report: Why Might a Person in 1830 Connect An Angel with a Salanmander?," STF-85b, FARMS Staff, Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies, P.O. Box 7113, University Station, Provo, Utah 84602, copyright 1985

(2) "Moses, Moroni, and the Salamander," FARMS Staff, in FARMS "UPDATE," transcript, copyright June 1985, p. 1. "The 'Preliminary Report'" (noted above in endnote #1), followed the UPDATE document.

(3) "UPDATE," p. 1

(4) *ibid.*

(5) *ibid.*

(6) *ibid.*

(7) *ibid.*

(8) *ibid.*

(9) *ibid.*

(10) *ibid.*, p. 2

(11) *ibid.*

(12) *ibid.*

(13) *ibid.*

(14) *ibid.*

Dallin H. Oaks and FARMS: Two Faith-Promoting Fakers for the Fraud

Edit by admin to fix hofmann link

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 09/05/2016 08:02PM by Eric K.

Further Proof on How Oaks Will Defend Anything, No Matter How Stupid . . .

Posted by: **steve benson** ()
Date: March 04, 2015 05:29PM

<http://exmormon.org/phorum/read.php?2,1529309>

Re: How Oaks and FARMS Made a Mad Rush to Save the Holy White Salamander (n/t)

Posted by: **^** ()
Date: March 05, 2015 05:16PM

Re: How Oaks and FARMS Made a Mad Rush to Save the Holy White Salamander

Posted by: **verilyverily** ()
Date: March 05, 2015 05:39PM

"salamander shows that certain animals are naturally proof against fires, for it is said to extinguish a flame by passing through it." – do the Fire Depts. all over the world know about this?

Screw the water hoses – start breeding salamanders! Every home should have one instead of a fire extinguisher.

"Only you can prevent forest fires."---Slithery the Salamander (n/t)

Posted by: **randyj** ()
Date: March 05, 2015 05:49PM

Re: How Oaks and FARMS Made a Mad Rush to Save the Holy White Salamander

Posted by: **funeral taters** ()
Date: March 05, 2015 06:07PM

Can you imagine the chuckle Hoffman must have got from all their responses? It's like when you said that dumbass kid from your scout troop on a snipe hunt.

Re: How Oaks and FARMS Made a Mad Rush to Save the Holy White Salamander

Posted by: **Chicken N. Backpacks** ()

Date: March 05, 2015 11:01PM

Can you imagine if Hofmann got away with it, and FARMS had that juicy salamander story in their box o' apologetics for 20 years, mentioned in lectures at BYU, The Ensign and firesides.....

.....THEN Hofmann gets busted for forgery and spills the beans.

Oh, that would be better than the Kinderhook Plates....

Re: How Oaks and FARMS Made a Mad Rush to Save the Holy White Salamander

Posted by: **backyardprofessor** ()

Date: March 05, 2015 11:07PM

Yes when I was an apologist I was astonished at how FARMS treated all this salamander silliness with trying to authenticate it! I knew it was a forgery from the get go, and when asked to speak at church on it I simply stood up at the pulpit and said come on people! This is a hoax! A few were angry at me because FARMS demonstrated it authentic. I said they did no such thing. Their defensive reaction gives them away doesn't it..... they do that with everything from B.H. Roberts to the fact that chiasmus is NOT an ancient Hebrew literary form, it is also in Mesoamerican texts and the D&C and in Joseph Smith's own writings. It is a human way of communicating, not an authenticating form to show the Book of Mormon is authentic. I actually feel sorry for the apologists almost now. Their bias is astonishing! Dan Peterson recently wrote that Bart Ehrman as an agnostic has shown that Jesus was real! Here he is using an AGNOSTIC to support Mormonism! Did he bother to inform folks of the utter thrashing Ehrman took in the reviews? Why of course not, that doesn't help him arrive at his faith-promoting answer. Folks an AGNOSTIC believes Jesus was real! We have HOPE! I mean all this is just too silly for words. Good work Steve.

Re: How Oaks and FARMS Made a Mad Rush to Save the Holy White Salamander

Posted by: **backyardprofessor** ()

Date: March 05, 2015 11:09PM

Interesting when I posted my response to him on my blog, Peterson unfriended me on Facebook. My life is crushed, my spirit heavy, oh my soul, how doth thou not rottest in apologetic hell? What can I do now for my salvation?!

Peterson unfriended you? You say that like it's a bad thing.....

Posted by: **randyj** ()
Date: March 05, 2015 11:47PM

I'm impressed if you pegged the Salamander letter a hoax from the outset, although I don't know how you arrived at that. I was a 27-year-old elder's quorum president at the time, and I read about the case in the Church News and our weekly Priesthood Bulletin. I taught a special lesson in EQ one Sunday to inform my bretheren about the wonderful new discoveries which proved the Joseph Smith story was true. And then it all came crashing down.

I didn't hear much more about the issue until a few years later, when I checked out the books "The Mormon Murders" and "A Gathering of Saints" from my local public library. Reading those books was one of the greatest influences on me realizing that the whole Mormon story was a fraud.

Kerry, as I read your post, I don't understand how you kept defending the church all those years on ARM and elsewhere.

Re: How Oaks and FARMS Made a Mad Rush to Save the Holy White Salamander

Posted by: **Dave the Atheist** ()
Date: March 05, 2015 11:29PM

good stuff

The only animal that fits this description is the hellbender

Posted by: **anybody** ()
Date: March 06, 2015 12:28AM

and they are grey and brownish tan in colour, not white

<http://moval.edu/Faculty/hilerw/hilerw.jpg>

Joseph said he saw all manner of apparitions so wny not a giant albino hellbender? No wonder the Brethren fell for it...

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 03/06/2015 12:43AM by anybody.

Re: How Oaks and FARMS Made a Mad Rush to Save the Holy White Salamander (n/t)

Posted by: ^ ()
Date: August 10, 2015 05:28PM

Re: How Oaks and FARMS Made a Mad Rush to Save the Holy White Salamander

Posted by: **whiteandlightsome** ()
Date: August 10, 2015 06:02PM

WAIT!!!! HOLY SHITTTTTTTTT!!!! THIS ACTUALLY HAPPENED???? I THOUGHT MORMONISM COULDT GET ANY FUNNIER!!!!

Re: How Oaks and FARMS Made a Mad Rush to Save the Holy White Salamander (n/t)

Posted by: **Topped** ()
Date: August 28, 2016 03:01AM

Re: How Oaks and FARMS Made a Mad Rush to Save the Holy White Salamander

Posted by: **Dennis Moore nli** ()
Date: August 28, 2016 10:05AM

Its so ironic that this topic was brought up again. I was thinking about the ridiculousness of this the other day.

Really,"inspired" people? Then try to include salamander references in writings. I was active in the 80's here in SoCal and never heard about it.

Oakes=Joke

I could insert a bunch of ripe cuss words here, but I'm getting ready to face the "normal" world and get ready for work.

Oh and listening to Seven Nation Army by White Stripes.

Have a ridiculously good day.

-Dennis LMAO!

**Re: How Oaks and FARMS Made a Mad Rush to Save
the Holy White Salamander**

Posted by: **blueskyutah2** ()
Date: August 28, 2016 12:01PM

According to his letter, he purchased the bomb materials in Logan. Any other details about this in the book?