

President Heber J. Grant declared that Elder Richards had the same qualities President Lund had possessed. The Church President also said that Elder Richards was kinder and more charitable than any of the general authorities and that is why he had been appointed to succeed President Lund. Elder Richards considered these comments to be highly complimentary as well as a motivation to maintain such confidence.<sup>14</sup> George F. Richards accepted his new assignment with fervor and after several years of temple service he exulted: "I am in love with my work."<sup>15</sup>

The clear emphasis of George F. Richards' presidency of the Salt Lake Temple was to streamline and shorten temple procedures so that more temple ordinance work could be performed. In the nineteenth century and during the early years of the twentieth century, the procedure for administering temple ordinances was cumbersome and time-consuming. It was not uncommon for a temple endowment session to take as long as eight or nine hours. Consequently only one session was offered on a given day. Church members with ordinary work and family schedules found it difficult to attend the temple often. Therefore the number of ordinances performed for the dead did not keep pace with the genealogical research of the Church. It was clear that ways had to be found to compress and pare down the temple procedures. George F. Richards may appropriately be viewed as

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 19 April 1921. LeGrand Richards later remembered that President Heber J. Grant told him that George F. Richards was "the most spiritual member of all the Twelve." LeGrand Richards Interview, 9 April 1982.

<sup>15</sup>Journal, Book 22, 1 November 1923.

a symbol of these new directions because of his contributions to streamlining temple procedures.

Elder Richards' predecessor, President Anthon H. Lund, had been concerned with these problems during his tenure as temple president. He had, for example, expressed disappointment in early 1919 that the temple had been closed for a week during January for maintenance and that no ordinances were performed.<sup>16</sup> In 1913 Church leaders approved his recommendation that a second endowment session be added to the day's schedule to relieve the crowded conditions.<sup>17</sup> Yet President Lund's work in the First Presidency prevented him from devoting much time to the temple although he was involved in a number of matters connected with it. In July 1919, for instance, he participated in a discussion connected with the temple garment, ceremonial under clothing worn by Latter-day Saints who have received the ordinances of the temple.<sup>18</sup> Modifications in the style of the garment were being contemplated by the First Presidency and would later be approved and announced in 1923. President Lund also worked on the scheduling problems at the temple and several months before his death he wrote: "I met with the [temple] workers. We informed them that tomorrow we will begin to hold four sessions of endowments."<sup>19</sup> But it was left to Elder Richards to do much of the work

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<sup>16</sup>Anthon H. Lund Journal, 13 January 1919.

<sup>17</sup>Journal, Book 16, p. 58, 13 February 1913. In 1916 investigations were conducted under President Lund's direction to determine the feasibility of increasing the seating capacity of the temple since many people were turned away each day because of too little space in the ordinance room. No changes, however, were made at that time. Ibid., Book 19, p. 28, 7 February 1916.

<sup>18</sup>Anthon H. Lund Journal, 2 July 1919.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 1 February 1921.

of shortening and streamlining the procedures of the temple. Elder Richards was also anxious to standardize the ordinances of the temple so there would be consistency in the procedures. To carry out his desire for uniformity, Elder Richards began immediately after his appointment as temple president to make suggestions and recommendations to the leadership of the Church. Those approved by the First Presidency were implemented by Elder Richards without delay.

An early change was the discontinuance of the temple choir. Long used as a part of the meeting preliminary to the actual temple session, Elder Richards believed the choir was not essential to the basic purpose of the temple. "Congregational singing will be engaged in exclusively," he wrote.<sup>20</sup> In another early change, Church leaders decided that the old form of ordaining men to the priesthood should be used in the temple. More elaborate forms had developed over the years and it was believed that simplicity would better serve the interests of the sacred procedures. "The old form is to be made uniform," wrote the new temple president.<sup>21</sup>

Several suggestions, which Elder Richards believed would refine temple procedures, were presented to the First Presidency in June 1921. A question arose concerning "administering to" or giving special blessings to the sick in the temple. From the early days of the Church Latter-day Saints had followed the New Testament pattern of Church elders anointing with oil and laying hands on the heads of sick persons and pronouncing a healing blessing through faith. Although such blessings

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<sup>20</sup>Journal, Book 22, 8-9 April 1921.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

could be given anywhere, Church members increasingly sought for and obtained them in the temple. Elder Richards believed administering to the sick was not a function that demanded the use of the temple ordinance rooms and, therefore, recommended that the place for administering to the sick be changed from the garden room to the assembly room in the temple annex. This would free the rooms of the temple for the specific purpose for which they were designed. Elder Richards also recommended that in preparing lists of children to be sealed to parents, they be listed in the order of their birth. When the sealing ceremonies are performed, the officiators should follow that order and not make a distinction between the living and dead children. This, he believed, would simplify the ceremony and make it shorter. These recommendations were approved by the First Presidency and set in motion by Elder Richards.<sup>22</sup>

With the numerous changes and refinements being made, the new temple president desired to assemble in one volume all of the new decisions and rulings relating to the temple. He intended to conduct, in concert with other Church leaders and under the direction of the First Presidency, a thorough review of the temple ordinances and procedures and to prepare a standardized temple book for use, not only in the Salt Lake Temple, but in the other temples as well.<sup>23</sup> Elder Richards' efforts

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 22 June 1921. The First Presidency had tried for several years to eliminate the practice of administering to the sick in the temple. See Clark, Messages of the First Presidency, 5:223-25. In addition to these matters the new temple president also recommended that when young people receive their endowment in anticipation of future marriage, the young man is not entitled to bring the prospective bride through the veil and receive her new name until the day of the actual marriage. He also suggested several adjustments in the ordinance of the second anointing. These recommendations were also approved by the First Presidency. Journal, Book 22, 22 June 1921.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 12 April 1921.

to prepare a book on temple ceremonies and rulings was a massive undertaking. Every minute of his spare time was devoted to the project. He obtained information from six notebooks compiled earlier together with a large number of letters, manuscripts, and other papers. He also sought to arrange his compilation by subject so that answers to questions could be readily found.<sup>24</sup>

The project required decisions on a number of matters yet to be ruled on by the First Presidency, whose duty it was to direct all the affairs of the temples of the Church. Accordingly, the new temple president continued to submit questions together with a number of suggested changes in the ordinance ceremonies. These were generally of a minor nature.<sup>25</sup>

By the spring of 1922, Elder Richards was delighted with his progress and at the end of May he met with the First Presidency to consider additional questions as well as some changes in the ordinances. He believed his work on this project was the major accomplishment of his temple presidency. He declared that obsolete rules had been eliminated and many new rulings had been approved by the First Presidency. He noted that copies of the decisions would be made and given to every temple president. He reported, moreover, that the temple ordinances were in the process of being rewritten and a copy furnished to each temple.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 28 October 1921.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 17 November 1921.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 31 May 1922. Cf. Ibid., Book 22, 5 December 1922.

A goal of changing the actual temple ceremony was to allow more rapid movement of patrons through the temple. One such change was made in June 1922 when Elder Richards recommended a modification in the use of the temple robe that shortened the temple ceremony. He also suggested using the words "Aaronic" and "Melchizedek" instead of "lower order of the Melchizedek and higher order of the Aaronic."<sup>27</sup> Elder Richards noted that these changes would clarify obscure definitions as well as decrease the length of the services by shortening the ordinance and eliminating unnecessary words.<sup>28</sup>

In 1923 George F. Richards asked the First Presidency for permission to expand his "temple book" project by revising and reducing to writing all the temple ceremonies formerly designated as "unwritten" ceremonies. Some of the ceremonies were so sacred to members of the Church that they had not been written. This increased the potential for local altering of the ceremonies. It was his desire to place a copy of these sacred rites in a "President's Book" to be given to the presidents of each of the Church's temples. He believed this would assure the use of authorized ceremonies only and eliminate the possibility of local innovations and changes being introduced into the ceremonies performed in the various temples. This recommendation was approved.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 3 June 1922. For a discussion of the importance of the temple ordinances, see Chauncey C. Riddle, "Symbols and Salvation," BYU Studies 8 (Spring 1968):311-24.

<sup>28</sup>Journal, Book 22, 7 June 1922. Elder Richards also made changes in some of the temple record keeping procedures. This action was taken to "avoid mistakes and simplify the work." Ibid., Book 22, 2 August 1923.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 14 April 1923.

The review of the temple ordinances was an ongoing process and was done with great care and attention. Elder Richards was chairman of a committee of apostles given the responsibility to conduct this review. The committee, consisting of Elder Richards, Joseph Fielding Smith, Stephen L Richards, James E. Talmage, David O. McKay, and John A. Widtsoe, recommended a number of changes designed to streamline the procedures.<sup>30</sup> The committee of apostles continued their work for several years and in early November 1926 Elder Richards attended what he called "a very important meeting" at which the committee submitted still other recommendations for ordinance changes. The First Presidency accepted their report with only a few minor changes.<sup>31</sup> But in January 1927 important decisions relating to the temple were yet to be made. Late in the month Church President Heber J. Grant summoned Elder Richards to his office where the First Presidency decided several important matters relating to the ordinances. It was their desire to bring to a conclusion the work being done by Elder Richards and his committee.<sup>32</sup> Two days later the last of the committee's recommendations were approved. There remained only to have the complete temple ceremony printed for all the temples.<sup>33</sup>

The new temple president was also concerned about making visits to the temple more pleasant experiences for members of the Church. On the first day he presided at the temple he brought the temple matron (a

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 2 November 1923.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 16 December 1926.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 25 January 1927.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 27 January 1927.

female Church member assigned to supervise the work of women in the temple), and other officiators before the temple presidency and advised them to be certain that kindness and helpfulness characterized their work at all times. Since members of the Church believe the temple to be the holiest place on earth and temple workers almost like angels, temple officiators must never do anything to disappoint them.<sup>34</sup> To assist temple personnel in their service, Elder Richards prepared a pamphlet entitled Instructions to Temples Workers which was approved by the First Presidency in October 1922 and distributed among all who worked in the temple. In it Elder Richards counseled temple officiators to assist patrons in every way; to be clean in body, clothing, and character; to avoid loitering in the halls and rooms of the temple; to avoid gum chewing; to be punctual; and to avoid removing temple ordinance books from the temple.<sup>35</sup>

In a similar project, Elder Richards later prepared a pamphlet entitled Instructions Concerning Temple Ordinance Work. This document was not a treatment of the ordinances themselves, but rather a consideration of the framework and atmosphere in which they are administered together with the genealogical activity that made the ordinance work possible.<sup>36</sup>

Though Elder Richards was president of the Salt Lake Temple, his influence in the Church's other temples was considerable. The leaders of

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 15 March 1921.

<sup>35</sup>George F. Richards, Instructions to Temple Workers, n.p., October 1922. Richards Papers.

<sup>36</sup>See Richards Papers. There is no publication date on the pamphlet.



the Church believed that the Salt Lake Temple was the model and standard for the others. Indeed, the Salt Lake Temple was viewed throughout the Church as the archetype for all the temples. Elder Richards, therefore, had tacit responsibility for the other temples and his work in Salt Lake City had Church-wide impact and influence. In 1922, for example, members of the First Presidency met with him in order to examine the baptismal font in the Salt Lake Temple. The Arizona Temple was under construction and the leaders of the Church were seeking to determine whether or not changes should be made in the font design of the new temple. After examining the temple font they decided that the Salt Lake Temple should be considered the "authoritative pattern."<sup>37</sup> A year later, as the time for the dedication of the new Alberta Temple approached, the First Presidency dispatched Elder Richards and Joseph Fielding Smith to Canada. Their assignment was to make all arrangements for the dedication services but also to instruct the new temple officiators in the ordinances and ceremonies they would soon begin to perform.<sup>38</sup>

Another incident which recognized George F. Richards' implied Church-wide authority over temple affairs occurred several years later. In 1930, he received an inquiry from a stake presidency as to what constituted worthiness to receive a temple recommend to enter the temple. Specifically they wanted to know if observance of the Word of Wisdom (the Mormon health code), and the payment of tithing were requirements.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Journal, Book 22, 8 September 1922.

<sup>38</sup>The First Presidency to George F. Richards and Joseph Fielding Smith, 7 August 1923. Cf. Journal, Book 22, 7 August 1923.

<sup>39</sup>Twin Falls Stake Presidency to George F. Richards, 20 November 1930. Richards Papers.

Elder Richards replied that because the temple blessings are the greatest God can give, Church members should be faithful, worthy Latter-day Saints before they are recommended to the temple. If they are unwilling to pay tithing there is little reason for them to be recommended to the temple where they would be expected to make solemn covenant to consecrate all they possess. The temple president also asserted that Church members should be sexually chaste and free from profanity before entering the temple. Moreover, users of tobacco and liquor should not be sent to the temple until they repent. Elder Richards reported that when people come to the temple smelling of tobacco or liquor they had been denied admittance. He urged the stake presidency to teach the people what was expected of them before they were recommended. "Help keep the temple free from pollution," he implored.<sup>40</sup>

To increase the capacity of the Salt Lake Temple, a revolutionary change was made in 1922. Under Elder Richards' direction the first evening session was added to the temple schedule for one night a week.<sup>41</sup> This first night session was held to commemorate President Brigham Young's birthdate. Five months later a second night session was also added to the schedule.<sup>42</sup> By early 1923 a third night session had been added and Elder Richards noted: "The patronage at these evening sessions seems to justify if not demand such action."<sup>43</sup> To further expand the

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<sup>40</sup>George F. Richards to the Twin Falls Stake Presidency, 25 November 1930. Richards Papers.

<sup>41</sup>Journal, Book 22, 1 June 1922.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 27 October 1922.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 12 January 1923.

capacity of the temple the number of seats was increased substantially. In January 1922 sixty chairs were added, increasing the capacity of 220 to 280. "I am delighted beyond my powers of expression," he wrote.<sup>44</sup> By April 1922 an additional twenty chairs had been added, raising the capacity to 300. Eight new veils were also used for the first time in April, which made a total of sixteen. This doubled the capacity and allowed 300 patrons to be taken through the veil in thirty minutes.

Several additional scheduling changes were also made by Elder Richards to expedite the temple services. Prior to 30 April 1928 endowment sessions were conducted on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays with Mondays and Saturdays devoted only to baptisms for the dead. Beginning on 1 May 1928 Mondays were added to the endowment schedule and Tuesdays became baptismal days. Saturdays were dropped altogether. But on 10 January 1933 Saturdays were reinstated as baptism days and each of the five weekdays became endowment days which gave temple patrons five full endowment days instead of four.<sup>45</sup> The change increased the endowment potential by 56,000 per year without adding to temple costs.<sup>46</sup> In another scheduling change, approval was given in August 1933 to Elder Richards' recommendation that the meeting held in the temple each morning

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 30 January 1922.

<sup>45</sup>The 1933 change was approved by the First Presidency on 17 November 1932. Ibid., Book 22, 17 November 1932.

<sup>46</sup>George F. Richards to the First Presidency, 16 November 1932.

before the start of the ordinance work be eliminated. Such meetings, he believed, were peripheral to the basic purposes of the temple.<sup>47</sup>

George F. Richards made a significant change in temple administration in 1922. He went before the First Presidency to consider a replacement for the temple matron who had been released after long service. He told the leaders of the Church that he thought it both proper and preferable to have his own wife assist him in his work rather than someone else's wife. He, therefore, recommended Alice Richards for the position. The First Presidency were unanimous and enthusiastic in their response to the recommendation. They noted that they had already considered the matter and had decided on Alice. President Grant was greatly moved by this episode and wept when he told Elder Richards of their decision.<sup>48</sup> Alice Richards was set apart as matron of the Salt Lake Temple on 25 August 1922.<sup>49</sup> Several months later her husband wrote: "My labors are very much more enjoyable than they were before my wife was called to assist me. She does exceedingly well & enjoys her work."<sup>50</sup> Since 1922 it has been standard procedure to have husband and wife serve jointly as temple president and matron.

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<sup>47</sup>Journal, Book 22, 12 August 1933. Another challenge related to temple ordinance work was non-attendance by general authorities. Elder Richards noted in 1930: "President Grant and a number of his family went through [the temple]. The President remarked to me, referring to a suggestion he made in our council meeting of a few weeks ago that others of the General Authorities should go through occasionally if not regularly, that with the other brethren, his suggestion didn't soak in very fast." Ibid., Book 22, 16 October 1930.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 26 June 1922.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 25 August 1922.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 22 October 1922.

Some changes in the temple under garment were made during Elder Richards' term as temple president. Such changes had been contemplated for a number of years wherein the leaders of the Church had sought to respond to shifting fashion patterns without violating the integrity of the purpose of the garment. The intent of the garment is to remind Latter-day Saints of their temple covenants and blessings and some Church members held the view that the specific pattern for the garment was revealed to Joseph Smith in every particular and detail. But the records of the Church Historian's Office had been diligently searched, and no revelation had been found in which the exact pattern of the garment was given. Accordingly, Church leaders approved changes on 17 May 1923. The modifications included elimination of the collar, the use of buttons instead of string ties, and the use of a closed crotch and flap. In addition, the women's garment was altered by creating elbow length instead of wrist length sleeves and leg lengths just below the knee instead of ankle length.<sup>51</sup>

Although there was opposition to such changes among some Latter-day Saints,<sup>52</sup> Elder Richards had learned some months earlier that such changes were both appropriate and normal. Some older members of the Church informed him that Emma Smith and Eliza R. Snow made the original temple clothing for the Prophet Joseph Smith. The reason they used strings on the garment was simply because they were too poor to buy

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<sup>51</sup>The First Presidency to Stake Presidents, 14 June 1923. Copy in the possession of the writer.

<sup>52</sup>See, for instance, Salt Lake Tribune, 4 June 1923. Predictably younger members of the Church were less perturbed by the changes than older Latter-day Saints.

buttons. It was not necessarily God's will that strings be used instead of buttons. The old-style collar was included because the seamstresses did not know how to finish the top of the garment and decided to do it with a collar.<sup>53</sup> While some members of the Church saw such changes as submission to the pressures of a gentile society, these adjustments were made without violating any of the doctrinal or liturgical standards given to Latter-day Saints through its revelations nor robbing the garment of its special and sacred functions. Several years later Elder Richards reported to the Council of the Twelve the substance of a conversation he had with his granddaughter in which she told of the effects of the old-style temple garment on Mormon girls. They were unable to wear desirable clothing because of the garment and some were marrying outside of the temple because of it. Church leaders were sympathetic with some of these concerns.<sup>54</sup>

Elder Richards' service as president of the Salt Lake Temple ended in 1937. During the period of his presidency, temple ordinance work increased substantially in all of the Church's temples. The number of temple ordinances rose from a total of 1.6 million in 1920 to 2.2 million in 1930. The shortening of the temple ordinance itself together with an expansion of the temple schedule were factors in this increase. The termination of World War I also appears to have been a factor. Temple ordinances remained at approximately 2.2 million per year from 1930 through 1940. After the eruption of World War II, the number of

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<sup>53</sup>Journal, Book 22, 11 October 1922.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 27 March 1930.

ordinances dropped precipitously to 1.2 million in 1945. The number of the operating temples remained the same from 1921 to 1945. Just as the World War slowed other phases of Church work, it also had a marked impact on the levels of activity in the Church's temples.

#### Church Superintendent of Temples

George F. Richards' service as president of the Salt Lake Temple continued until 30 April 1937. He had been notified of his impending release from the temple presidency on 9 April and of the intentions of the First Presidency to appoint him as Acting Patriarch to the Church.<sup>55</sup> But five days later, in addition to the patriarchal appointment, Elder Richards was also called to serve as Church Superintendent of Temples.<sup>56</sup> Formal announcement of his new assignment was made by the First Presidency on 15 April<sup>57</sup> and he was set apart on 17 April 1937. Alice Richards was also set apart as an assistant to her husband in his temple assignment.<sup>58</sup>

The work George F. Richards had loved so much in the Salt Lake Temple was now officially expanded to include all the Church's temples.

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., Book 23, 9 April 1937. After his release from the temple presidency, Elder Richards prepared "A Memorandum of the Events and Some of the Things Accomplished in and about the Salt Lake Temple during the Period of my Administration--From March 14, 1921 to April 30, 1937." Richards Papers.

<sup>56</sup>Journal, Book 23, 14 April 1937. Stephen L. Chipman was appointed to replace Elder Richards as president of the Salt Lake Temple.

<sup>57</sup>Journal History, 15 April 1937, p. 5, and 4 May 1937, p. 5.

<sup>58</sup>Journal, Book 23, 27 April 1937.

His approach to his new assignment was the same as his first temple assignment. Just as he had sought to standardize ceremonies and procedures while serving as president of the Salt Lake Temple, Elder Richards now began the process of assimilating routine and ritual in all Church temples.

Within the next several months Elder Richards made official visits to most of the temples. During these visits he removed from each temple a rule book containing eighty-four regulations and left in its place a new rule book containing one hundred thirty-one regulations.<sup>59</sup> A number of refinements relating to Church temples were made by Elder Richards during the early months of his new assignment. It was determined during the summer of 1937 that baptisms for the living should be discontinued in the Church's temples and each of the temple presidents was so notified.<sup>60</sup> He believed that temples were not erected for the purpose of performing baptisms for the living. To the extent this was practiced, time and energy were spent on non-essential functions.

Additionally, the practice of calling Church members on missions to perform temple work was ended by Elder Richards. He felt that the responsibility to perform the ordinance work belonged to every Latter-day Saint rather than a selected few. Those who could spend more time in the temple were welcome to do so, but thereafter they would not be given formal calls to so labor.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., Book 23, 13 July 1937.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., Book 23, 21 June 1937.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., Book 23, 5 October 1937.



Elder Richards believed that temple presidents should be compensated for their service and recommended that salaries be paid to them. In July 1937 the pay was set at \$250.00 per month.<sup>62</sup> He also presided over changes in the temple record keeping program which increased the efficiency of the work considerably by taking advantage of the most recent technological advances.<sup>63</sup>

Some additional changes in the temple ceremonies were made during George F. Richards' supervision of Church temples. In 1940, under the direction of the First Presidency, he instructed temple presidencies to discontinue the ring service in marriage ceremonies. Rings could be exchanged after the ceremony, but not as part of the ordinance itself. The ring service was a legacy of sectarian marriages and certainly typified important aspects of marriage. But it was not thought to be necessary in temple marriages. In addition, Elder Richards also directed temple presidents to discontinue providing prayer rooms with altars for individual use. The temple, he believed, was not erected for such purposes. Church members could pray with as much intensity at home as in the temple.<sup>64</sup>

George F. Richards was deeply committed to the temple work of the Church. He believed the temple to be the central feature of Mormon doctrine. All good things desired by Church members, whether in this life or the next, could be achieved through the temple. The highest degree of eternal reward together with the establishment of eternal

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., Book 23, 29 July 1937.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., Book 23, 30 January 1939.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., Book 23, 5 September 1940.

marital and family relationships were possible only in the temple. In 1943 he published a newspaper article in which he urged Latter-day Saints to a greater consciousness of these truths and greater involvement in the work itself. He was especially anxious that Church members perform genealogical research to locate deceased ancestors and then repair to the temple and perform the necessary ordinance work.<sup>65</sup> Elder Richards also corresponded with Church members on matters relating to temple work. In his letters he answered questions and encouraged greater devotion to temple activity.<sup>66</sup>

The supervisor of Church temples was anxious to modify temple ordinances in an effort to streamline temple work and make it more efficient, but he was equally insistent that this be done without compromising what he considered to be the essential and sacred characteristics of the work. He was, for example, a staunch defender of the temple ordinance called the second anointing. Because of its sensitive character, strict controls governed its administration. In earlier generations, recommendation for the ordinance came from stake presidents. Prior to 1928 the ordinance was used regularly. It was

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<sup>65</sup>See George F. Richards, "Message on Genealogy and Temple Work," Deseret News, 25 September 1943. Cf. Journal History, 24 September 1943, pp. 11-12. Elder Richards would take no payment for writing Church related articles. He noted in 1939: "I received a check for \$12.00 from the article I had written for the Era of Dec./38. I returned the check with the statement that I would not feel right to receive pay for such a service. I have done the likes before." Journal, Book 23, 17 February 1939.

<sup>66</sup>See, for example, Mrs. Frank R. Carter to George F. Richards, 16 February 1947, and George F. Richards to Mrs. Frank R. Carter, 19 February 1947. Richards Papers.

customary for stake presidents to make recommendation for the ordinance to the President of the Church. Special recommend books were issued to stake presidents for that purpose. If the President of the Church approved the recommendation, he invited the candidate to the temple located in the temple district wherein the individual lived. Upon presentation of a written recommend at the temple the temple president administered the second anointing to the recipients who were charged as a part of the ceremony to say nothing about the ordinance. After 1928 such recommendation came only from members of the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve. Approval of the President of the Church was always a necessary prerequisite before the ordinance could be administered.<sup>67</sup>

George and Alice Richards received their second anointings in 1897 upon the recommendation of their stake president, Hugh S. Gowans.<sup>68</sup> After Elder Richards became president of the Salt Lake Temple, he administered the ordinance on numerous occasions. In June 1921, for example, he noted: "Administered seconds to my son LeGrand & his wife and others."<sup>69</sup> Four years later he wrote: "I administered 2nds to my son George & his wife Edith May and detailed to them the usual charge."<sup>70</sup>

During his early years as Salt Lake Temple president, George F. Richards was a firm supporter and defender of the second anointing and he urged an expanded use of the sacred ordinance. But in 1928 a Church member in Idaho, who had received his second anointing, divulged to a priesthood meeting details of the ceremony and advised his listeners to

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<sup>67</sup>See Clark, Messages of the First Presidency, 3:328.

<sup>68</sup>Journal, Book 5, p. 147, 12 March 1897.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 1 June 1921.

obtain their second anointings as soon as possible. This, of course, was a serious infraction of the charge he was given when he received his second anointing and, upon hearing of the incident, members of the First Presidency were incensed. They immediately recalled all special recommend books and issued instructions that no recommends for second anointings should be given by stake presidents. After 1928 only members of the Council of the Twelve and the First Presidency were authorized to make recommendations for second anointings. Such recommendations, however, were rarely acted upon favorably and the ordinance fell into virtual disuse.

Recognizing this circumstance Elder Richards expanded his efforts to have the ordinance administered more often. In a letter to Church President Heber J. Grant in 1934, he reported that a number of general authorities had not received these blessings. He recommended to President Grant that J. Reuben Clark, Jr., Charles H. Hart, Levi Edgar Young, Samuel O. Bennion, and John H. Taylor, together with their wives, receive the sacred ordinance.<sup>70</sup> After his call to be Church Supervisor of Temples in 1937, Elder Richards intensified his efforts to refocus sometimes distracted attention on the ordinance. In December he received permission to administer the rite to John Scott and his wife who were

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., Book 22, 1 October 1925. Several months after his call to the temple presidency, Elder Richards called on the First Presidency and presented them a book containing all of the official rulings and instructions pertaining to the second anointings. Ibid., Book 22, 10 November 1921.

<sup>71</sup>George F. Richards to Heber J. Grant, 19 April 1934. Cf. Journal, Book 22, 19 April 1934. For a review of the use of the second anointing in the Church, see David John Buerger, "'The Fulness of the Priesthood': The Second Anointing in Latter-day Saint Theology and Practice," Dialogue 16 (Spring 1983):10-44.

dead.<sup>72</sup> The following month he gave the ordinance to Rufus K. Hardy and his wife.<sup>73</sup>

But in 1942 George F. Richards launched an intensive campaign among his fellow general authorities to restore the waning practice of administering second anointings to its former status. Whereas over thirty-two thousand such ordinances were administered in the Church's temples before 1930, only eight second anointings were performed between 1930 and 1942 when Elder Richards instituted his personal crusade.<sup>74</sup> His campaign began in earnest in September 1942. In an impassioned address to his fellow apostles he deplored the virtual discontinuance of the administration of second anointings. He discussed the importance of the ordinance together with its history in the Church. Motivated by his comments, the apostles passed a motion that Elder Richards should present these views to the First Presidency in the next appropriate meeting.<sup>75</sup> His opportunity came in December 1942 when he resumed his efforts during a meeting of the First Presidency, the Twelve, and the Patriarch to the Church. Elder Richards reviewed his earlier comments to the Twelve and when he was finished the leaders of the Church voted to sustain him in his efforts. It was also decided that J. Reuben Clark, Jr., Albert E. Bowen, Harold B. Lee, and Patriarch Joseph Fielding Smith should receive their second anointings as well as some others recommended by the

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., Book 23, 11 December 1937.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., Book 23, 24 January 1938.

<sup>74</sup>George F. Richards to the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve, 18 August 1949. Richards Papers.

<sup>75</sup>Journal, Book 23, 29 September 1942

Council of the Twelve. Elder Richards was assigned to administer the ordinances and Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith was appointed to assist him. At the end of 1942 thirteen of the thirty-two living general authorities had not received their second anointings. Two others had received their second blessings in connection with their first wives but not their second wives whom they married after their first wives died. George F. Richards was delighted with the outcome of the December meeting and summarized his feelings when he wrote: "I have anxiously looked forward to this action."<sup>76</sup>

Two weeks later, on Christmas Eve 1942, Elder Richards suggested to an ailing President Heber J. Grant at his home that he issue recommends to all the general authorities and their wives who had not received their second anointings. President Grant also approved the special blessing for Stephen L. Chipman and his wife, president and matron of the Salt Lake Temple. After the recommends were prepared and distributed Elder Richards declared: "I feel this day's accomplishments have been inspired and is a wonderful accomplishment. May the Lord be praised forever. This is one of the most happy days of my life."<sup>77</sup> In assessing his accomplishments and service at the end of 1942, Elder Richards wrote: "I have . . . been instrumental in reviving the former practice in the Church of administering second anointings to faithful members, the practice having gone practically into disuse . . . . I am

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., Book 23, 10 December 1942.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., Book 23, 24 December 1942.

sure that the Lord has inspired what I have been able to do along these lines."<sup>78</sup>

While Elder Richards was successful in his efforts to revive the use of second anointings among Church leaders and their families and other prominent Latter-day Saints, he continued to be disappointed that the ordinance was not widely administered to the general membership of the Church. This circumstance was unacceptable to him and in a meeting of the Council of the Twelve in 1949 he again presented his views on the matter. His sentiments were approved by his fellow apostles who, by formal motion, requested Elder Richards, now president of the quorum, to

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., Book 23, 31 December 1942. Many prominent members of the Church received the ordinance at the hands of Elder Richards. In 1943 he noted: "Administered 2nds to Bro. & Sis. Thom. Evans McKay." Ibid., Book 23, 22 December 1943. In 1944 he "administered 2nds to Elder E.T. Benson & wife." Ibid., Book 23, 30 August 1944. In 1945 he "administered second blessings to two living couples and two proxy couples." Ibid., Book 23, 7 February 1945. A week later Elder Richards "adm. 2nds to Pres. J.R.C. Alice A. Richards proxy for Sister C." Ibid., Book 23, 14 February 1945. The following day he "administered 2nds to Joel & Georgia, Nerva & Geo." Ibid., Book 23, 15 February 1945. Still later in the year he "administered seconds to Pres. L. Ray Christiansen and wife of Logan Temple." Ibid., Book 23, 25 June 1945. Three weeks later he "administered special blessing at the Temple for Albert Ernest Bowen and his two wives, 1st wife dead." Ibid., Book 23, 18 July 1945. In 1947 Elder Richards "received from President George Albert Smith a recommend for Bessie [Elder Richards' second wife] to receive her seconds." Ibid., Book 23, 21 November 1947. In 1950 Elder Richards "went to the Temple by appointment, and administered Second blessings to three of the general authorities and their wives, Elders Eldred G. Smith, Milton R. Hunter and Bp. Thorp B. Isaacson." Ibid., Book 24, 6 January 1950. Later in the year Elder Richards "obtained permission from President Geo. Albert Smith for my sons Oliver and Ray and their wives to receive their Second Anointings." Ibid., Book 24, 20 April 1950. Accordingly, Elder Richards noted several weeks later: "Assisted by Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, my assistant, I administered Second blessings to my sons Oliver and Ray and their wives in the Salt Lake Temple." Ibid., Book 24, 3 May 1950.

present the matter to the First Presidency.<sup>79</sup> According to these instructions, he wrote to the First Presidency and solicited an opportunity to present his views in a meeting of the Presidency and the Twelve. He suggested that the meeting be held at a time when all could attend because he believed a full quorum would be desirable.<sup>80</sup>

The First Presidency granted Elder Richards' request and several days later he presented to the Church leadership a paper in which he vigorously deplored general authority neglect of the use of the second anointing among the general membership of the Church. He declared that he had long felt great disappointment over the virtual discontinuance of the sacred ordinance among average Church members and that the Lord was highly displeased with such disregard.

Elder Richards told his associates that the second anointing was given by revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith to be administered to worthy members of the Church. The practice had continued from the early days of the Church to the administration of President Heber J. Grant. He also asserted that revelations to Joseph Smith directed Church leaders to administer second anointings to members of the Church<sup>81</sup> and to neglect these commandments will be "attended by the Lord's displeasure, and bring upon us cursings instead of blessings, wrath, indignation and judgments."

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., Book 23, 12 August 1949.

<sup>80</sup>George F. Richards to the First Presidency, 13 August 1949. Cf. Journal, Book 23, 13 August 1949.

<sup>81</sup>See Doctrine and Covenants 124:40-41, 47-48.



George F. Richards remarked that Joseph Smith taught the importance of the second anointing when he declared in 1844: "We calculate to give to the Elders of Israel the washings, and anointings, and to attend to those last and more impressive ordinances without which we cannot obtain celestial thrones . . . and be made kings and priests unto the Most High God."<sup>82</sup> This statement, said Elder Richards, refers directly to the second anointing since in no other Church ordinance are men made "kings and priests unto the Most High God." This, he declared, is the basic intent of the second anointing.

Moreover, George F. Richards argued that failure to administer the second anointing to worthy members of the Church is to withhold promises made in the temple ceremony itself. Thousands of faithful Latter-day Saints are dying, he said, without the fulfillment of the promise. The aged apostle reminded his fellow Church leaders that when members of the Church receive their second anointings they are given a charge not to speak about it. It is true, he admitted, that an indiscreet Church member had violated that charge in 1928 by publicly speaking about the ordinance. But Elder Richards believed that no serious consequences had resulted from the infraction and that the First Presidency had overreacted in the matter by discontinuing the

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<sup>82</sup>Smith, *History of the Church*, Vol 6:318-20. Other statements made by Joseph Smith related directly to the second anointing according to Elder Richards. The Prophet said: "No man can truly say he knows God until he had handled something, and this can only be in the Holiest of Holies." Ibid., Vol. 4:608. Also: "All men who become heirs of God and joint heirs of Jesus Christ will have to receive the fulness of the ordinances of his kingdom; and those who will not receive all the ordinances will come short of the fulness of that glory, if they do not lose the whole." Ibid., Vol. 5:424.

administration of second anointings. He insisted that a resumption of the practice would have a great stimulating effect upon recipients of the ordinance and the Church would be much stronger as a result. Faith and religious activity would increase and the progress of the Church would be enhanced. He believed that the ordinance could be reinstated without difficulty and new temples could be constructed with appropriate facilities. Tight controls could be retained with approval for second anointings given only by the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve. Elder Richards insisted that longer delay would result in greater divine condemnation.

George F. Richards concluded his presentation to his colleagues hoping that his recommendations would not be shelved and that his views would receive full consideration by Church leaders. These matters, he declared, had given him "great mental anxiety and spiritual concern." The aged apostle closed his address by saying: "But for want of courage I would have sought an opportunity to be heard years ago. I do not want to leave this stage of action without vigorously protesting our indifference and neglect."<sup>83</sup> He reported that his paper and other statements made by him were accepted unanimously by his fellow Church leaders but the available data does not disclose the ultimate consequence of Elder Richards' persuasive importunings. It is evident that while he lived the practice was restored to some use and enjoyed a degree of currency in the

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid., Book 23, 18 August 1949. Cf. George F. Richards to the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve, 18 August 1949. Richards Papers.

Church, predominantly among prominent members of the Church. Although he wanted to avoid any elitism in the Church, he was happy with the gains he had made.

#### Personal Activities

Occasionally George F. Richards contrasted his accomplishments with those of his father, Elder Franklin D. Richards. He reflected on this difference in 1923 when he wrote that he felt "very small and inadequate for the responsibility which has come to me in the Church. I do feel that the Lord helped me in every direction of my life's activities." After commenting on his family, membership of the Tooele stake presidency, call to the apostleship, and presidency of the European Mission and Salt Lake Temple, he added that he was grateful for his blessings and all that he had been able to accomplish for the Church. But he also said: "I feel that I have done but very little for the cause as compared with what my father has done for it. How am I to correct my record," he asked, "but by plodding along in faithfulness and devotion to my calling."<sup>84</sup>

Elder Richards meticulously avoided editorial or critical comment about his colleagues in the Church hierarchy nor did he ever contrast himself with any of them. It is evident that his educational achievement and intellectual prowess did not match that of such Church leaders as David O. McKay, B.H. Roberts, James E. Talmage, or John A. Widtsoe. His son later remembered: "Father was not an outstanding man educationally. His scholastic education all came before he was twenty-one years of age.

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<sup>84</sup>Journal, Book 22, 17 July 1924.