



**Esotericism made Exoteric:
Insider and Outsider Perspectives
on the 2006 Mormon Temple
Public Open House in Espoo, Finland**

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Purpose

- ▶ Discuss the different perspectives with which insiders and outsiders approached the open house

Material

- ▶ Personal observations
- ▶ Newspaper and magazine writings
- ▶ Feedback cards
- ▶ Visitor writings on internet fora

Outline

- ▶ Mormon temples and their esoteric nature
- ▶ Insider perspectives
- ▶ Outsider perspectives
- ▶ The place and future of Mormon temples

Mormonism and Temples

- ▶ Religion founded as "The Church of Christ" in 1830 by Joseph Smith jr. (1805-1844)
- ▶ Temples not part of original Mormonism
- ▶ The concept developed in stages throughout Smith's life

The Kirtland Temple

[Picture removed]

The Nauvoo Temple

[Picture removed]

The Salt Lake City Temple



Latter-day Saint Religious Ceremonies

- ▶ Mormonism is a sacramental religion
- ▶ Baptism and confirmation not esoteric
- ▶ Temple ceremonies seen as higher ordinances reserved for faithful insiders
- ▶ Performed also on behalf of the deceased in order for God's justice to be fulfilled

The Endowment Ceremony

- ▶ The esoteric center of Mormon temple ceremonies
- ▶ A partly audiovisual drama giving a panorama of the meaning of life and the road back to God, Heavenly Father
- ▶ Special clothing, keywords, and other symbolism

The Masonic Connection

- ▶ The endowment ceremony was introduced shortly after Joseph Smith became a Freemason in 1842
- ▶ Similarities in symbolism and ritual
- ▶ Much similarity has been removed in changes to the endowment ceremony
- ▶ A source of controversy

The Insider Perspective

- ▶ The challenge: How to make the esoteric partly and intelligibly exoteric?
- ▶ A first-rate missionary opportunity
- ▶ Hope for the Holy Spirit's touch
- ▶ "Milk before meat"
- ▶ What is mysterious to one is logical and deeply meaningful to another

The Outsider Perspective (1/2)

- ▶ Mormonism often viewed as "the other"
- ▶ Poll (2003): 8% positive, 57% negative
- ▶ Youth poll (2006): 10% vs. 40%
- ▶ The high number of visits (~ 56,000) and the wide media interest is surprising

The Outsider Perspective (2/2)

- ▶ A broad spectrum of thoughts

"Bling-bling Americanness", absurdity,
and duplicit ecumenism

vs.

Peace, tranquility, and beauty

- ▶ Difficult to say why such variation of opinion
- ▶ Individual backgrounds mostly not available

Discussion and Conclusions

- ▶ The esoteric became exoteric through choice, not exposé
- ▶ Comparison to similar events would be instructive in many respects
- ▶ For outsiders, the visit may be one of the fleeting experiences in the marketplace of spirituality
- ▶ For insiders, temples will remain essential components of faith



Thank you!
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