

## 15. A REVIEW OF COMPARISONS

In addition, the fact that there is currently no data in area B reveals that, from a broad-brush perspective, there is very little that is purely original in the temple ordinances. No element is entirely unique to Joseph Smith. In other words, every element of the temple ordinances examined is related in some fashion to the Bible, ancient sources, and/or Freemasonry.

### E. What Is the Relative Strength of the Resemblances?

Now that we've had an initial overview of these relationships, let's look at them in a more nuanced fashion. Going beyond the rough binary assessment about whether the Bible, ancient sources, or Freemasonry are or are not minimally related in some fashion to the various elements of the temple ordinances described in the book, below I give my own assessment of the relative *strength* of the relationship in each case—lumping together the Bible with other ancient sources because I found it unnecessary to tease them apart for this purpose. Examining these judgments of relative strength will allow readers to understand in the case of each element whether Freemasonry or ancient and biblical sources are better aligned to the temple ordinances.

#### General Comparisons to the Temple Ordinances (Chapter 6)

In the realm of general comparisons of Freemasonry to the temple ordinances, it is evident that:

- Masonry does not consider its rites essential for salvation (6B).
- The need for priesthood authority (vs. the need for correct knowledge) is not a relevant concern for Freemasonry (6D).
- The overall sequence of events in the endowment is not strongly related to the Craft rites or other degrees (6F).
- The necessity of joint exaltation of man and woman as eternal companions is not a Masonic teaching (6G).
- Masonic rites are not performed on behalf of the deceased ancestors (6H).

With respect to the remaining three elements of general comparison, where there is some similarity in beliefs, I view the resemblances of the Bible and ancient sources to temple ordinances to be stronger than that of institutional Freemasonry:

- Though many Freemasons accept the central role of Jesus Christ in their lives and may see the Savior represented allegorically in Masonic rites, Freemasons are not enjoined by virtue of their membership in the fraternity to accept the exclusively Christian doctrine that “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”<sup>1692</sup> (6A).
- Though legends specific to Freemasonry allude to precedents in antiquity, there is no requirement in Freemasonry to believe that these legends are

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historical.<sup>1693</sup> By way of contrast, Latter-day Saint scripture and doctrines relating to beliefs in the literal descent of priesthood authority from ancient times require a belief in the historicity of Adam and others listed in modern scripture, despite imperfections in biblical texts and the presence of figurative elements in the accounts of their lives. Moreover, in my view, the narrative of the temple ordinances hews more closely to ancient threads in the Bible and elsewhere in antiquity than to the stories of authentic and speculative Freemasonry in nineteenth-century Christian Masonic writings<sup>1694</sup> (6C).

- Though the rites of Freemasonry provide evidence of a belief in the exaltation of the righteous (generally similar to the Bible), the temple ordinances embody specific elements that relate more closely not only to the Bible but also to relevant ancient sources that Joseph Smith is unlikely to have known (6E).

### Comparisons to Latter-day Saint Initiatory Ordinances (Chapter 7)

Bernard's 1829 exposé mentions the following rites of washing and anointing in some of the additional degrees beyond Craft masonry. Note that each of these explicitly mentions or alludes to related biblical traditions:

- The book of Exodus is cited as a rationale for a candidate for the “Prince of the Tabernacle” degree of the Scottish Rite to be “washed in water” prior to taking on an obligation (7A).
- The rites of four different degrees are outlined where, in three instances, a candidate is said to have been anointed in likeness of the biblical characters Eleazar, Melchizedek, David, and Solomon (7B).

With respect to clothing and the new name:

- The symbolism of the square and compass in conjunction with a particular arrangement of clothing is used in the Entered Apprentice degree. Freemasons are presented with an apron that is to be worn at ceremonial occasions and that is buried with them in death. There is also similarity in the general Christian idea of the difference between the rags of mortality and the immortal glory with which the righteous will someday be clothed. However, Masonic rituals do not require the everyday wearing of garments representing Adam and Eve's “coats of skin” and bearing sacred marks that are tied to the symbolism of Christ's flesh on the veil, consistent with allusions in the Bible. Apart from the important related symbolism of the

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square and compass, the clothing element of the initiatory ordinance is more similar to analogues in the ancient world and the Bible (7C).

- Although Freemasonry does not include a new name ritual per se as part of the three Craft degrees, a Masonic prayer quotes a Psalm referring to anointing, these rites mention the biblical term “new name” in connection with the name of “CAUTION.” In addition, Nicholas S. Literski considers that “the revealing of various names [of symbols] in the different degrees are ... a conferral of those names.”<sup>1695</sup> Finally, in the Mark Master degree the candidate is given a white stone with the initials of a name marked upon it, with reference to Revelation 2:17 (7D).

Though there are significant points of intersection between Freemasonry and the ordinances in washing, anointing, and new names, all of them derive from the Bible, which I view as more closely related to the ordinances. The garment is more closely tied to the Old Testament (Adam and Eve) and the New Testament (Christian symbolism).

### Comparisons to Ritual Gestures and Language Patterns (Chapter 8)

Similarities in some ritual gestures and language pattern are among the most important elements of Freemasonry that may have served as a catalyst for the Prophet to receive revelation about similar elements in temple ordinances.<sup>1696</sup>

- The overlap in the gestures of Freemasonry and the temple ordinances for some of the tokens and signs is significant and it appears that shared gestures were likely to have been adopted and adapted from Freemasonry. Differing from the practical utility of the gestures in Masonry that addressed the everyday needs of early craftsmen, the use of these symbols in the temple goes beyond recognition and authentication to symbolize in step-by-step fashion the readiness of worshipers to take upon themselves in progressive fashion each one of a series of increasingly exalted identities as they advance toward godhood. This practice is closer to ancient religious conceptions than to Freemasonry. The meanings of the words and gestures used in the temple ordinances also differ from Freemasonry and in that they relate directly to the life and mission of Jesus Christ (8A).
- The similarity of a particular dialogue pattern used in Masonic rites and (formerly) in the temple ordinances is likewise significant. Though general dialogue patterns of a similar sort can be found elsewhere in ancient sources, it appears that this specific pattern of interaction among officiants in the endowment was adopted and adapted for temple use. In addition, certain generic phrases within the repeated patterns of catechistic questions

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and answers that teach the meanings of signs, tokens, key words, and penalties in the Nauvoo temple endowment are so similar to those employed in Masonic rites that borrowing and adaptation also must have occurred in these instances (8B).

### Comparisons to the Endowment (Chapter 9)

Apart from the significant elements of the ritual gestures, ritual language patterns, and the sacred embrace, there is relatively little resemblance between Masonic rites and the temple endowment. Examining these elements one by one, I find that

- Though Adam and Eve are mentioned in nineteenth-century Masonic writings and candidates briefly take on the role of fallen Adam in a rite described in Morgan's 1826 exposé, the temple story of the reversal of the Fall through covenants, ordinances, and the Atonement of Jesus Christ is more apparent in the Bible and ancient sources (9A).
- A narrative involving three messengers can be seen in Masonic rites through the covenant of King Solomon, King Hiram of Tyre, and Hiram Abiff, but the accounts of these messengers in the Bible and ancient sources are more similar to the endowment (9B).
- The craft degrees of Freemasonry include a number of obligations and charges that are generally consistent with Latter-day Saint principles and teachings. However, the specific ladder-like progression of temple covenants, corresponding to the layout of ancient Israelite temples, is not present in Masonic rites (9C).
- Though the rites of Freemasonry requires candidates to learn the names of specific symbols, they do not include the bestowal of a hierarchical progression of sacred names or titles on individuals as similar to what is documented in the Bible and other ancient sources (9D).
- The roles of prophet, high priest, and king are taken on by three designated officers during the ritual drama of the Royal Arch rite. However, a series of progressive, permanent, personal names and titles relating to the ordinances and the authority and power offices of the priesthood are not explicitly given to the initiate in the rites of Freemasonry (9E).
- By way of contrast to the priestly clothing of the endowment, the Bible, and other ancient traditions, "in the Masonic system the apron consists almost entirely of [the] ritual dress minus the clothes for the initiate"<sup>1697</sup> (9F).
- There is no prayer circle in the York degrees of Freemasonry, and an analogue mentioned in the rites of the appendant organization of the

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“Heroines of Jericho” diverges from more ancient patterns emulated in the temple endowment (9G).

### Comparisons to Traversing the Veil in the Endowment (Chapter 10)

The biblical symbolism of the sacred embrace and the temple veil is used in the temple endowment and, separately, in two Masonic degrees:

- In the Master Mason degree, a brief ritual embrace upon the “five points of fellowship,” not connected with any veil, is enacted as a token of brotherly love and as a mode of recognition among fellow Masons. For many years, the Latter-day Saint endowment also included an embrace, involving a veil, was described as including “five points of fellowship.” Though there are relevant biblical precedents for this embrace in the stories of Elijah and Elisha and more specific precedents going back at least to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the similarity in specific gestures and nomenclature leaves little doubt that Joseph Smith adopted and adapted this ritual gesture from Freemasonry. However, like the other symbolic gestures in the endowment, it was not used as a token of brotherly love or as a mode of recognition, but rather—consistent with the rest of the endowment and hints in early Christian sources—had a distinct symbolism related to ancient and modern scripture, especially the life and mission of Jesus Christ (10A).
- In the Royal Arch degree, initiates traverse a series of four veils. “At each partition, there are readings of the Book of Exodus and passwords recalling Old Testament characters or phrases.”<sup>1698</sup> In the temple endowment, participants pass through a single veil corresponding with to the division between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies in the Israelite temple. The verbal exchange at the veil in the endowment is more strongly reminiscent of sources such of the biblical story of Jacob, temple rites in Israel, Egypt, and the ancient Near East than it is to the exchange in the Royal Arch rite (10B).

### Comparisons to Sealing Power (Chapter 11)

Philosophically, Latter-day Saints and Freemasons both view marriage as a vow that should be honored and respected and engage in many efforts to address the needs of children and extended families. Many if not most Masons have a hope for eternal life in the presence of God and for a reunification with loved ones. However, Freemasonry has no teachings relating to a sealing power of the priesthood relating to keys held by the prophet Elijah that is required to secure such blessings through priesthood ordinances (11A).

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### Comparisons to the Fulness of the Priesthood (Chapter 12)

The fulness of the priesthood and the more sure word of prophecy were the subject of chapter 12.

- In the Royal Arch degree, a crown is symbolically placed on the head of the initiate, evoking a widely recognized symbol of kingship for the righteous in the next life similar to what is promised in the Bible. The details of the rites of the fulness of the priesthood are closer to the specific model of royal rites described in the Bible and other ancient sources than to Freemasonry (12A).
- The idea of the more sure word of prophecy in Latter-day Saint teachings draws inspiration from ancient sources such as Jewish traditions relating to the story of Jacob and New Testament sources such as 2 Peter chapter 1. I am currently not aware of no comparable teaching in Masonry. Although Christian Freemasons expect their faithfulness as disciples of Jesus Christ to prepare them to meet God in the afterlife, Masonic rites, unlike temple ordinances and their heavenly counterparts, are not seen as being required to qualify them for this eventuality (12B).

### Comparisons to Nauvoo Temple Features (Chapter 13)

The following comparisons of the Nauvoo Temple and Masonic Lodges were made:

- In overall conception, both Masonic lodges and Latter-day Saint temples strive to emulate ideas from ancient temples. In their broad design, Latter-day Saint temples are arguably closer to their biblical counterparts (13A).
- While the Nauvoo Temple uses individual elements important in Masonry, its external building features were inspired by direct revelation and draw more directly on New Testament symbolism (13B).
- Apart from the presence of veils used during the Royal Arch rite, the layout and furnishings of the ritual space for that degree (and the Craft degrees) are more different than similar. The ritual objects within the Lodge are more numerous and symbolically rich than the simpler furnishings required by the temple endowment and, except for the presence of an altar, have little overlap (13C).

### Comparisons to the Two Crowning Adornments (Chapter 14)

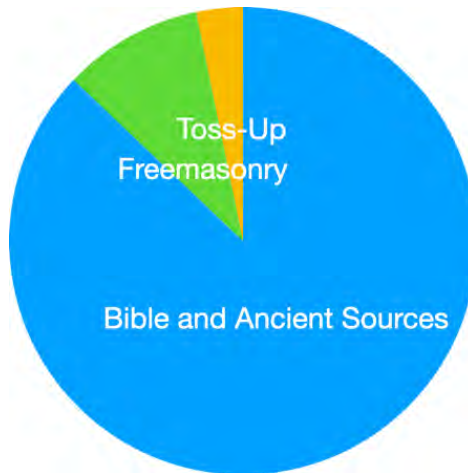
Comparisons of the two crowning adornments of the Nauvoo Temple yielded the following observations:

- In this case, I found it a toss-up as to whether the Nauvoo Temple symbolism of “Holiness to the Lord” was closer to Freemasonry or the Bible

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and ancient precedents. Neither the Bible nor Freemasonry provide a precedent for the Latter-day Saint practice of using the phrase as an inscription on temples. Following biblical injunctions, both Latter-day Saints and Masons take seriously the principle of “Holiness to the Lord” as it applies to the thoughts, words, and conduct of individuals (14A).

- The Nauvoo Temple weathervane is a striking instance of the use of ancient symbols employed in a definite sequence to represent the ascending offices of prophet, priest, and king. I have not yet been able to locate sources in the Masonic literature that relate the symbolism of the square and compass to the sequence of prophetic, priestly, and royal emblems described in ancient sources and, as it seems, in the weathervane (14B).



15-5: Elements of temple ordinances classified according to their strongest relationships.

Figure 15-5 summarizes my conclusion that the temple ordinances, while not fully paralleled in any single source, are more strongly related to biblical and ancient sources than to Freemasonry. In other words, with some important exceptions, the relationship of Masonic rites to temple ordinances is mostly a comparison of contrasts.

More specifically, for twenty-eight of the thirty-one elements examined, the Nauvoo Temple ordinances seem generally closer to the Bible and other ancient sources than Freemasonry. However, in one instance, it seemed to be a toss-up (14A) and in three instances, it seems to me that the rites of Freemasonry have a stronger relationship to the element of the Nauvoo temple ordinances in question than did the Bible and ancient sources: ritual gestures (10A), ritual language patterns (10B), and the sacred embrace (12A). This is of special interest because of Elder Franklin D. Richards' statement. He said:<sup>1699</sup> “Joseph, the Prophet, was aware that there were some things about Masonry which had come down from the beginning and he desired to know what



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they were, hence the lodge. The Masons admitted some keys of knowledge appertaining to Masonry were lost. Joseph enquired of the Lord concerning the matter and He revealed to the Prophet true Masonry, as we have it in our temples.” Thus, Joseph Smith’s desire to learn more or confirming his existing knowledge about the “some keys of knowledge appertaining to Masonry” may have been one of the significant reasons for Joseph Smith’s having formed the Nauvoo Lodge in the first place.

Of course, the elements I’ve used are rough and preliminary and my judgments are somewhat subjective. New findings in future studies will require a re-assessment of some of the data. However, I’ve tried to provide enough data in the book from primary sources that readers can easily examine these relationships for themselves and come to their own conclusions.

The finding that in all but a handful of instances the temple ordinances more closely resembled the Bible and other ancient sources than Freemasonry provides (plausible but always tentative) evidence that the ordinances are largely ancient and biblical in character. Saying this another way, the results of the comparative study demonstrate that whatever elements Joseph Smith may have borrowed from Freemasonry, he seems to have used his prophetic gifts to bring them closer in line with ancient precedents.

Should these finding be interpreted to mean that Freemasonry was irrelevant to Joseph Smith’s inspired development of temple ordinances in all but the three instances mentioned earlier? Not necessarily. Even when the final form of the Nauvoo temple ordinances differs significantly from a related element in Freemasonry, it’s possible that an aspect of a Masonic rite served as a catalyst for the resultant revelation that transformed the initial idea into its final form. Because Joseph Smith was a prophet, he was capable of recognizing and developing sparks of truth through revelation, no matter where those sparks came from in the first place. If further research suggests the possibility of a previously unnoticed spark of inspiration from somewhere in his environment, that does no injury to my faith in Joseph Smith as a prophet.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The process of writing this book has strengthened my testimony of the divine nature of the temple ordinances. I also hope that readers will come away from their study with a greater understanding and respect for the contributions of Freemasonry in promoting the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the transcending of divisive human boundaries, the liberating role of knowledge, and the moral and spiritual power of charity put into practice—all of which are demonstrated in great abundance by our Masonic brothers (and sisters in Masonic-allied organizations).