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'cults' because of their heretical doctrines. Most Evangelical counter-cult movements do regard Freemasonry as a 'cult', and more often than not connect the lodges with occultism if not Satanism. Unlike secular anti-cultists, Christian counter-cultists are very much interested in determining that some new religious movements are 'similar' to Freemasonry, or have some sort of 'masonic roots'. Since for them Freemasonry is an occult and Satanic enterprise, if it can be proved that certain new religious movements have a masonic origin, they automatically become guilty, by association, of all the evils imputed to the Craft.

It is comparatively rare that this line of attack is used against the more recent new religious movements. Some of them (including a number of those of Japanese origins) are openly anti-masonic. Others do not have any apparent relationship with Freemasonry. Occult-esoteric new religious movements such as Thelema, the movement originating from the British magus Aleister Crowley (1875–1947), do present organizational and initiatory structures similar to (or patterned after) Freemasonry. Quasi-masonic structures are ubiquitous in new religious movements with occult or esoteric interests; in fact, only a minority of them are organized under lines entirely different from Freemasonry. Examples of quasi-Masonic organizations include the renaissance of witchcraft under the name of Wicca under Gerald Brousseau Gardner (1884–1964), and several dozens neo-Templar movements throughout the world. These movements adopted a Masonic structure since many of their perspective members were familiar with it, and perhaps because allusions to Freemasonry conferred to newly founded organizations a certain respectability. What critics are looking for is evidence of a 'hidden' connection between a specific new religious movement and Freemasonry. For several reasons, counter-cultists have focused on three large American new religious movements born in the nineteenth century: the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, popularly known as the Mormon Church; Jehovah's Witnesses; and Christian Science. Although often based on quite preposterous arguments, the criticism has been paradoxically helpful, since it has encouraged academic scholars to devote some serious studies to the relationships between these movements and Freemasonry.

Mormonism and Freemasonry

The relationship between Mormonism and Freemasonry remains a very sensitive issue both for Freemasons and Mormons. There have been instances of Mormon scholars counseled by their church's authorities to avoid the issue

altogether (Homer 2014: 353). Masonic scholars are also embarrassed by the fact that, while Freemasonry claims to welcome people of all faith, Mormons in fact have been excluded for decades in Utah.

The roots of the problem lie in the fact that no other new religion has been influenced by Freemasonry in such a crucial way as Mormonism, nor has any other newly arisen denomination threatened Freemasonry with the very real prospect of taking over the Craft in a large area of the United States. Joseph Smith (1805–1844), the Mormon prophet, grew up in Upstate New York, in the so called burned-over district, at a time of Protestant religious awakening. These revivals involved an element of anti-masonry, although many New Yorkers who gathered to hear the preachers were, in fact, Freemasons. William Morgan (1774–1826), whose mysterious disappearance in 1826 fuelled rumors of a masonic assassination, was a former Freemason turned anti-mason living in Batavia, New York, where he wrote for the *Republican Advocate*. Thanks also to the sensational reports of his alleged murder, his anti-masonic posthumous book *Illustrations of Masonry* (Morgan 1826) became a best seller and went into at least twenty editions between 1826 and 1830.

Joseph Smith was familiar with Morgan's anti-masonic classic and for a time evolved in the deceased journalist's circles. Morgan's widow, Lucinda Morgan Harris, later became a Mormon in 1834 and a plural wife of the same Joseph Smith in 1838, after the Mormon prophet had introduced the practice of polygamy (although the status of Smith and Lucinda's marriage has been disputed by some scholars). Among the first followers of Joseph Smith there were Freemasons, including Smith's elder brother and close associate Hyrum, 1800–1844, a member of Mount Moriah Lodge No. 112 in Palmyra, New York. The masonic affiliation of Joseph and Hyrum's father, Joseph Smith Sr (1771–1840) is a matter of dispute (Homer 1994: 15–16). Yet Smith's followers also included anti-masons (such as Martin Harris [1783–1875]).

The anti-masonic influence is apparently more prominent in the *Book of Mormon*, first published in 1830. Mormonism's new scripture was based, according to Smith, on his translation of golden tablets found under Hill Cumorah near Manchester, New York, under the guidance of an angel who later took the tablets to Heaven. In the *Book of Mormon* quasi-masonic 'secret combinations' are exposed and denounced. In the *Book of Moses*, a part of the *Book of Mormon* where the story of Cain and Abel is retold, Satan reveals to Cain that his name is Mahon, and enters into a secret alliance with him; "wherefore Cain was called Master Mahon, and he glorified in his wickedness" (Moses 5: 31). Lamech, an evil descendant of Cain, also "entered into a covenant with Satan after the manner of Cain wherein he became Master Mahon, master of that great secret which was administered unto Cain by

Satan" (Moses 5: 49). "From the and their works were in the dar

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Satan" (Moses 5: 49). "From the days of Cain, there was a secret combination, and their works were in the dark" (Moses 5: 29).

These passages were easily read as references to Freemasonry, and "Master Mahon" clearly assonates with 'Master Mason'. According to a report in *The Geauga Gazette*, Joseph Smith's close associate Martin Harris explicitly advertised the *Book of Mormon* in 1831 as a new "Anti-masonick [sic] Bible" ("The Golden Bible" 1831). Protestant anti-Mormons such as the famous preacher Alexander Campbell (1788–1866) in turn derided the fact that the *Book of Mormon*, allegedly written several centuries before the establishment of modern Craft, "decides all the [modern] great controversies and even the question of Freemasonry" (Campbell 1831: 93).

Critics of Mormonism, in fact, described Mormons both as similar to Freemasons and as anti-masons. While the *Book of Moses* included what appeared as anti-masonic passages, the Mormons' love for ancient rituals made them somewhat similar to the Freemasons. Joseph Smith's judgment of Freemasonry seems to have evolved from the publication of the *Book of Mormon* in 1830 to the completion of the plans for a temple to be built in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1833. Smith became persuaded that the original rituals of Freemasonry could be traced back to the pre-Christian Jewish rites of Solomon's Temple. During the course of time these rituals became degenerated and Freemasonry came to be dominated by 'spurious' Masons of Cain's lineage. Smith's own 'Restoration movement' (that is, Mormonism) would restore also Freemasonry to its pristine, uncorrupted status.

The problem, which has puzzled many interpreters, of how the anti-Masonism of the *Book of Mormon* and of Smith's early New York circle turned into the enthusiastic embrace of Freemasonry by the Mormons in the 1840s, can thus be solved. Smith kept denouncing 'spurious' Freemasonry as a deviation from the Craft's original rituals and aims, while espousing 'genuine' Freemasonry as part of his Restoration. Of course, on which brand of Freemasonry was 'genuine', and which one 'spurious,' Smith and the American masonic authorities of his time had very different views. Ultimately, Smith believed that the endowment rituals that he administered in Kirtland and later in Nauvoo, Illinois did include everything the ancient, 'genuine' Freemasonry was all about. As a symbol of the fact that not only Christianity, but also Freemasonry was in need of a return to its sources and was part of the Mormon Restoration, Smith decided that a certain number of Mormons should be formally and regularly initiated into masonic lodges.

When Smith contacted the masonic authorities in Illinois with this request, they were recovering from a time of difficulties. The Grand Lodge of Illinois had just been re-organized in 1840 under Grand Master Abraham Jonas

(1801–1864). Its Deputy Grand Master, James Adams (1783–1843) had himself secretly converted to Mormonism in 1836. The contacts between Smith and the Grand Lodge were handled by John Cook Bennett (1804–1867), an adventurer who in 1840 joined the Mormon Church, and whose maneuvers were later crucial in the tragic events leading to Smith's assassination in 1844. Bennett was himself a Freemason, and was instrumental in persuading Grand Master Jonas to recognize in 1842 as regular the Nauvoo Lodge, which had been organized (in fact, with several masonic irregularities) at the end of 1841.

Eventually, the Nauvoo Lodge came to include in 1842, with Jonas' blessing, 285 Freemasons, more than half of Illinois' total of 480 (Homer 1994: 30). This alarmed Illinois Freemasons, and gave them the impression that the Mormons were taking over the Craft in their State. Rumours of polygamy, spread in masonic circles by John Bennett after he broke with Smith, contributed to the Freemasons' concerns, although Jonas initially sided with the Mormon prophet in his fight with Bennett. At the same time Jonas ordered an investigation into the activities of the Nauvoo Lodge (or lodges, since at the end of 1842 their number had grown to five). During the course of the investigation the Mormons went on and initiated another 187 men. The idea originally championed by Jonas that the Mormons' benefic influx would simply give new life to the struggling Illinois Freemasonry was gradually replaced by the fear of a Mormon takeover. Jonas himself was voted out of office in October 1843. The lodges in Nauvoo were disenfranchised, and a bitter fight between the Freemasons and the Mormons followed.

The Mormons did not accept the decision and kept appealing to higher masonic jurisdictions. In the meantime, the Nauvoo lodges went on as if nothing had happened, raised the number of their members to more than seven hundred (Homer 2014: 167), and a masonic lodge building was inaugurated with due pomp on April 5, 1844. When Joseph Smith was incarcerated and lynched by a mob in the jailhouse of Carthage, Illinois on June 27, 1844 several of the mob's leaders were, in fact, Freemasons, although the question of the 'clandestine' lodges in Nauvoo was but one among many which led the events to their tragic conclusion. Whether Smith, before dying, really gave the masonic sign of distress and exclaimed, as only a Freemason would do faced by a fatal threat, "Is there no help for the widow's son?" is a matter of historical dispute, while it is true that the lodge in Warsaw, Illinois, was investigated by the Illinois Grand Lodge for its participation in the Carthage tragedy, although none of its members was finally disciplined.

Mormon Freemasonry, now perceived by Masons in good standing in the United States as just another 'clandestine' imitation of the Craft with no regularity whatsoever, continued its activities in Nauvoo even after Smith's death

and by the end of 1845 included after the Mormons moved to masonic rituals had been entire ment and other rites, and were followers of Joseph Smith. When 'Gentile' (that is, non-Mormon) Although there were a few Morr and the world, they were forb which had from their very be Mormons. This prohibition appl Utah. Forms of 'clandestine' or operated in Utah, but did not re individual Utah (regular) lodges only in 1984 the *Code of the Gr* exclusion of Mormons for mo were now free to join Freemas according to masonic authoriti their members not to join 'secr Utah Mormons who became F their Church (Homer 1992).

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Adams (1783–1843) had himself the contacts between Smith and Bennett (1804–1867), an adventurer, and whose maneuvers were his assassination in 1844. Bennett was instrumental in persuading Grand Master John C. Bennett, which had been organized (ies) at the end of 1841.

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and kept appealing to higher authorities. Nauvoo lodges went on as if their members to more than 100. Masonic lodge building was inaugurated in 1842. Joseph Smith was incarcerated in Carthage, Illinois on June 27, 1844. The Freemasons, although the question of the relationship among many which led the prophet, before dying, really gave the Freemason would do faced by the question "is a matter of historical importance?" Illinois, was investigated by the Carthage tragedy, although

Freemasons in good standing in the tradition of the Craft with no reservations even after Smith's death

and by the end of 1845 included 1,366 Master Masons (Homer 2014: 178). Only after the Mormons moved to Utah in 1847 their authorities declared that masonic rituals had been entirely superseded by the Mormon temple endowment and other rites, and were no longer necessary nor appropriate for the followers of Joseph Smith. When Freemasonry arrived to Utah, in 1858, it was a 'Gentile' (that is, non-Mormon) enterprise, shaped by the old Illinois enmity. Although there were a few Mormon Masons in other parts of the United States and the world, they were forbidden from visiting and joining Utah lodges, which had from their very beginnings a strict exclusionary policy against Mormons. This prohibition applied to regular lodges under the Grand Lodge of Utah. Forms of 'clandestine' or irregular Freemasonry open to Mormons also operated in Utah, but did not recruit a large following. Only after World War II individual Utah (regular) lodges decided to open their doors to Mormons. And only in 1984 the *Code of the Grand Lodge of Utah*, which had sanctioned the exclusion of Mormons for more than 120 years, was amended. Mormons were now free to join Freemasonry everywhere, including in Utah, at least according to masonic authorities. Mormon leaders, in fact, kept counseling their members not to join 'secret societies', including Freemasonry, although Utah Mormons who became Freemasons after 1984 were not disciplined by their Church (Homer 1992).

The move to Utah and the building of Mormon temples, first in Utah and subsequently throughout the world, started a new and different controversy. Mormon Temple rituals are in principle secret and cannot be revealed to outsiders. Such a large organization as Mormonism, just as Freemasonry itself, fatally has apostate ex-members who, for different reasons, decide to write exposures. When details of Mormon rituals were published, Freemasons quickly recognized several similarities with their own ceremonies. Not only the rituals but also specific wordings and oaths still present quite obvious parallels (although reforms in the twentieth century have 'de-Masonized' portions of the Mormon holiest ritual, the endowment). Early rituals of the female Relief Society (which have been, however, largely abandoned) also had elements of similarity with adoptive Freemasonry, and the rationale for excluding African Americans (and 'blacks' in general) from the Mormon priesthood (a policy which remained in force until 1978) was similar to early arguments used for excluding them from masonic lodges.

Early Mormon leaders, including Joseph Smith and his first successor Brigham Young (1801–1877), liberally admitted that there was a "similarity of priesthood in Freemasonry", as Smith himself taught according to a letter by Mormon apostle Heber C. Kimball (1801–1868) (Kimball 1842). Things changed when anti-Mormon Freemasons mounted nationwide campaigns accusing the

Mormon Church of being simply a clandestine form of Freemasonry, and anti-masonic Evangelical and Fundamentalist Christians claimed that Mormonism derived all its rituals and doctrines from Freemasonry, which they regarded as an evil organization devoted to the occult. This criticism started in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and continues to this day. The Mormon reaction was a denial of any connection between early Mormonism and Freemasonry in publications intended for a larger audience, and a quiet counsel to Mormon academics to avoid the issue in the specialized journals. When in 1974 Reed C. Durham, then Director of the Latter-day Saints Institute of Religion at the University of Utah, devoted his presidential address at the Mormon History Association's annual meeting in Nauvoo, Illinois, to the relationship between Mormonism and Freemasonry, he was counseled not to publish his text in the Association's *Journal of Mormon History*. Durham "even sent a letter of apology to every person who heard his speech" (Homer 2014: 353), although his controversial text was later distributed (without his authorization) in both masonic and anti-Mormon circles, and today may be read on the Internet (Durham 1974).

Several books and articles, however, have been devoted to the issue since 1974 (Homer 1992, 1994, 2014; Brooke 1994; Buerger 1994; Forsberg 2004), and the question is slowly becoming both less sensitive and less controversial. Few scholars of Mormonism would doubt that there are indeed 'similarities' between Mormon and masonic rituals, or deny that Joseph Smith devoted a substantial amount of time and energy to the organization of masonic lodges in Nauvoo, after his earlier contacts with the anti-masonic movement in Upstate New York. The meaning of these 'similarities' should however be explored. Joseph Smith did believe that the rituals of King Solomon's temple were part of the 'original' Freemasonry, and that they were very valuable tools for elevating the human soul to the contemplation of God's deepest mysteries. He also believed, however, that these mysteries and rituals had been lost by Freemasonry through centuries of decadence, just as he thought that the original Christianity had been lost through the apostasy of the churches and reduced to a mere 'priestcraft'. His mission, the Restoration, by restoring religion to its original God-intended meaning, in fact almost automatically also included a restoration of Freemasonry. The idea expounded by Smith's successors that actual masonic lodges were needed only before, and not after, Mormon temple rituals became largely available, i.e. after the Restoration had been truly completed with the Mormons' settlement in Utah, seems to be true to Smith's original teaching on Freemasonry. The Nauvoo Lodge belonged to an intermediary period, before the work of the Restoration was completed in full.

The similarity of the ritual reforms, remains to this day. . . into it. In devising the Mormon for both theological and practical the 'original' (not to be confused masonic ritual was part of . . . Practically, he knew that many or familiar with Freemasonry doctrine that was not only different Freemasonry. The latter was exclusive. Freemasonry preached co-operate together, and that . . . tion. For Smith, the Mormon Church no salvation outside it. It was after Smith's death consistent Freemasons, with a rationale Roman Catholic Church. Smith the purpose of confirming his trine which had no 'similarities lodges.

Jehovah's Witnesses and

Jehovah's Witnesses are a two established in 1878 by Charles were known as the Bible Students Jehovah's Witnesses have often that Russell was himself a Freemason of Russell's affiliation is however of Freemasonry, as evidenced by magazine, *The Watch Tower*, or Russell wrote—if judged by its more than fraternity and financial as we can judge, there is a connection connected with the rites of this not comprehend but which, in natural mind for worship, and in spirit and in truth—through Master" (Russell 1895: 142). The

ine form of Freemasonry, and anti-Christians claimed that Mormonism was a form of Freemasonry, which they regarded as a distortion. This criticism started in the last century and continues to this day. The Mormon movement was born between early Mormonism and the Latter-day Saints movement, and a quiet counter-movement in the specialized journals. When Brigham Young gave his presidential address at the end of his presidency in Nauvoo, Illinois, to the relationship between the two movements, he was counseled not to publish his speech. Durham "even sent Brigham Young his speech" (Homer 2014: 353), but it was distributed (without his authorization) and today may be read on the

It has been devoted to the issue since the 1990s (Forsberg 1994; Forsberg 2004), and the issue is sensitive and less controversial. The fact that there are indeed 'similarities' between the two movements is a fact that Joseph Smith devoted a great deal of his organization of masonic lodges to the anti-masonic movement in the 1840s. The 'similarities' should however be seen in the rituals of King Solomon's temple and that they were very valuable tools for the revelation of God's deepest mysteries and rituals had been lost in the apostasy of the churches and the Restoration, by restoring religion in fact almost automatically also the idea expounded by Smith's success only before, and not after, the Restoration, i.e. after the Restoration settlement in Utah, seems to be a fact. The Nauvoo Lodge belonged to the Restoration was completed

The similarity of the ritual, to some extent and notwithstanding several reforms, remains to this day. Anti-Mormons, however, often read too much into it. In devising the Mormon temple rituals, Smith used a masonic language for both theological and practical reasons. Theologically, he recognized that the 'original' (not to be confused with the contemporary and 'spurious') masonic ritual was part of the pristine tradition of the Old Testament. Practically, he knew that many of his early followers were either Freemasons or familiar with Freemasonry. But Smith used these rituals for conveying a doctrine that was not only different, but antithetical, to nineteenth century Freemasonry. The latter was, in fact, inclusive, while Mormonism was exclusive. Freemasonry preached that men of all religious persuasions should co-operate together, and that truth does not belong to any single denomination. For Smith, the Mormon Church was the only true church, and there was no salvation outside it. It made sense, again, that Mormon authorities after Smith's death consistently counseled their followers not to become Freemasons, with a rationale not very dissimilar from the one used by the Roman Catholic Church. Smith had used the masonic language of the rituals for the purpose of confirming his followers familiar with Freemasonry into a doctrine which had no 'similarities' with anything they had heard in the masonic lodges.

Jehovah's Witnesses and Freemasonry

Jehovah's Witnesses are a twentieth century development of a movement established in 1878 by Charles Taze Russell (1852–1916), whose followers were known as the Bible Students. Evangelical critics of contemporary Jehovah's Witnesses have often claimed that they have masonic origins, and that Russell was himself a Freemason (Springmeier 1992: viii), though evidence of Russell's affiliation is however scarce. In fact, Russell was occasionally critical of Freemasonry, as evidenced by an article he published on the Bible Students' magazine, *The Watch Tower*, on June 15, 1895. "The Order of Free Masons—Russell wrote—if judged by its past history, has some secret object or scheme, more than fraternity and financial aid in time of sickness and death. And, so far as we can judge, there is a certain amount of *profane* worship or mummery connected with the rites of this order and some others, which the members do not comprehend but which, in many cases, serves to satisfy the cravings of the natural mind for worship, and this hinders it from seeking the worship of God in spirit and in truth—through Christ, the only appointed Mediator and Grand Master" (Russell 1895: 142). This is a rather standard Christian criticism of

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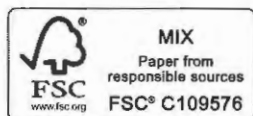
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