

Joseph became an "Entered Apprentice" Mason on March 15, 1842. Jonas dubbed Joseph a Mason "on sight" to allow him to officiate as chaplain while being installed. The next day Joseph rose through degrees of "Fellow Craft" and "Master Mason." Impressed though he must have been, his journal entry for the installation expressed most pleasure in the celebration following the initiation. The Masonic procession began at Joseph's store near the river and marched to the grove at the base of the temple bluff, where three thousand people gathered. Joseph reported that "a Large number of people assembled on the occasion, the day was exceedingly fine, all things were done in order, and universal satisfaction manifested."⁵¹

If Joseph thought of Freemasonry as degenerate priesthood, he did nothing to suppress his rival. Once the Nauvoo lodge was organized, Mormons joined in large numbers. Eleven of the Twelve Apostles became Freemasons. By October 1842, the 253 members of the Nauvoo lodge outnumbered the 227 Masons in all the other Illinois lodges combined. The Mormons organized four additional lodges over the next year. In June, less than seven weeks after bestowing the endowment on the first group of brethren, Joseph celebrated "St. Johns day," in honor of John the Baptist, a Masonic favorite, by riding in procession to a public celebration attended by thousands. In April 1844, the Saints dedicated the Nauvoo Masonic Hall, the finest completed building in the city.⁵²

Masonic instruction would have attracted Joseph. Masonic candidates sought light, a powerful word in Joseph's revelations. Biblical imagery was mixed generously with a conglomeration of symbols—grips, signs, tools, architecture, objects, scriptures, stories, actions, many of them references to the craft of masonry. After the ceremony initiating members into a higher degree, a lecture summarized the symbols and their importance for instilling virtue and brotherhood.⁵³ The outcome was a circle of committed brethren, loyal to each other to the death, forming a bulwark against a wicked world. After the Masonic installation and the first endowment ceremony, Heber Kimball wrote Parley Pratt that "Brother Joseph feels as well as I Ever see him. one reason is he has got a Small Company. that he feels safe in thare ha[n]ds." Kimball probably referred to the men who had been endowed, but the Masonic lodge was one more line of defense against a hostile world.⁵⁴

Intrigued by the Masonic rites, Joseph turned the materials to his own use. The Masonic elements that appeared in the temple endowment were embedded in a distinctive context—the Creation instead of the Temple of Solomon, exaltation rather than fraternity, God and Christ, not the Worshipful Master. Temple covenants bound people to God rather than to each other. At the end, the participants entered symbolically into the presence of God.⁵⁵

Endowment, Joseph's name for the temple ceremony, connected it to

promises made long before his encounters, the word "endowment" referred to a celestial spiritual light. The use of the word "endowment" suggested that the goal of coming into God's presence was a spiritual rather than a transcendent vision. The eighteenth-century empiricist and occultist observed that outbursts of visions and ecstasies lacked form to keep them alive. They required "no rites, no ceremonies, no holy obligations, but a common train of life, and preserve the same to remain in force, "enthusiasm" had to be sustained. Lives, a modern scholar of religion, has argued, "lives only when it is supported by a system of practices."⁵⁶ The Mormon temple's sacrament was the original enthusiastic endowment.

The resemblances of the temple rite to the endowment as an offshoot of the occult. Between 1840 and 1900, membership in Masonic lodges over 6,000,000. The lodges' success was due to their appeal among American males. In the hard-boiled world of the lodges, set up an alternative universe of brotherly world of the lodges. The endowment was not male bonding. The endowment rooms and passing through the endowment, the female pair, were the representative of Hiram Abiff. The aim of the endowment was the exaltation of husbands and wives.⁵⁸

The Nauvoo endowment is more a variation of Jewish tradition that flourished in the occult. As one commentator explained, the desire to encounter God: "The positive presence of God is unknowable: 'Thou shalt not know the face of God.' The occultists sought not only to define and control the occult, but a kind of spiritualized cosmogonic philosophy. The governing passion was to have his presence. Joseph was not seeking a mystic God, but a presence. Joseph's God existed in time and space. The fundamental trajectory of the occult is the desire and expectations of mystics for a mystical dream of conjunction with the divine."⁵⁷

How Joseph Smith could have tie



Joseph Smith
1844.

JOSEPH SMITH

ROUGH STONE ROLLING

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