



Type: Journal Article

An Important New Study of Freemasonry and the Latter-day Saints: What's Good, What's Questionable, and What's Missing in *Method Infinite*

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Source: *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*,
Volume 54 (2022)

Published by: The Interpreter Foundation

Page(s): 223–332

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Review of Cheryl L. Bruno, Joe Steve Swick III, and Nicholas S. Literski, *Method Infinite: Freemasonry and the Mormon Restoration* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2022). 544 pages. \$44.95 (hardback); \$34.95 (softcover).

INTERPRETER



A JOURNAL OF LATTER-DAY SAINT
FAITH AND SCHOLARSHIP

Volume 54 · 2022 · Pages 223 - 332

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What's Missing in Method Infinite**

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Offprint Series

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ISSN 2372-1227 (print)
ISSN 2372-126X (online)

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**AN IMPORTANT NEW STUDY OF FREEMASONRY
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Two paragraphs from the early pages of the book provide, perhaps, the best way to understand the authors' objectives in proper perspective:

While no one thing can entirely explain the rise of Mormonism, the historical influence of Freemasonry on this religious tradition cannot be refuted. This work ... offers a fresh perspective

on the relationship between Freemasonry and the Mormon restoration. It asserts that the Mormon prophet's firsthand knowledge of and experience with both Masonry and anti-Masonic currents contributed to the theology, structure, culture, tradition, history, literature, and ritual of the church he founded. There is a Masonic thread in Mormonism from its earliest days. ...

As an adult, Smith relied on Masonry as one of the primary lenses and means by which he sought to approach God and restore true religion. Yet this aspect of his work has been abandoned by his modern-day followers. Masonry in Mormonism has been placed upon the woodpile.¹

Consistent with the ambitious agenda summarized in this paragraph above, I hope that this review will persuade readers that there is much to celebrate in this important new study of Freemasonry and the Latter-day Saints. Cheryl Bruno's well-crafted prose and her personal research contributions build on the copious investigations and preliminary writing of Nicolas S. Literski, JD, PhD, that began two decades ago. Joe Steve Swick III, for his part, contributed knowledge of the breadth and depth of the larger Masonic history that made an enormous difference in the final product.

To their credit, the authors have succeeded in creating a work that is richer than earlier studies of the subject, probing many previously unexplored hints of Masonic influence on Latter-day Saint life and thought from the beginning of the Restoration through the end of the nineteenth century.

That said, the book's dauntingly broad survey suffers from uneven quality on some of the many topics it ambitiously tackles. While recognizing the study's considerable merits, its shortcomings must also be taken into account. For this reason, I've divided the review into three parts.

In the first part, entitled "What's Good," I will describe what I think are the strongest contributions of the book — namely, those that draw on primary historical sources relating to Freemasonry and the Latter-day Saints. Significantly, as part of their new contributions to the intersecting history of these groups, the authors have included little-known material on Masonic influences within nineteenth-century expressions of the Restoration outside of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Commendably, the authors have also highlighted the role of women in their discussion of Freemasonry, including perspectives

on the organization and governance of the Relief Society. The attention given to the events surrounding the death and burial of Joseph Smith is also noteworthy.

Part two, entitled “What’s Questionable,” follows with a discussion of selected examples of portions of the book that rely on more tenuous evidence and arguments. The examples I have chosen are related to three topics: Joseph Smith’s early history, the perceived influence of Masonry on the translations and revelations of Joseph Smith, and the relationship of Freemasonry to the temple. These are controversial subjects and have generated a large amount of scholarly literature. On the one hand, the authors’ familiarity with the history and works of Freemasonry have allowed them to go further than any previous effort in unearthing possible connections with Latter-day Saint history and teachings. On the other hand, the book repeatedly invokes a handful argumentation patterns that often overstate the strength of perceived Masonic connections — sometimes explicitly, at other times implicitly. Table 1, at the beginning of part 2, classifies selected examples according to the faulty argumentation patterns they exemplify.

In part three, entitled “What’s Missing,” I apply some of the principles of scholarship relating to comparative analysis to help illuminate the relationship between Freemasonry and the temple ordinances, arguably the subject of greatest interest for the typical Latter-day Saint reader. No serious scholar today would deny that there is an important relationship between these rites, but the nature and extent of that relationship is a complex and frequently debated question. Adding to the difficulty in discerning this relationship is that, as the authors correctly observe, some Masonic features that were part of the Nauvoo endowment have been eliminated in modern temple ceremonies, “sometimes at the expense of what their Masonic origins might reveal to the thoughtful Latter-day Saint.”² Further complicating the situation is that it is unknown whether any of the terminology and ritual dialogue patterns that are similar in Freemasonry and the temple ordinances were originally part of the endowment as given by Joseph Smith in the Red Brick Store or were introduced later as part of the revisions and standardization that occurred under the direction of Brigham Young.³

In addressing the relationship between Freemasonry and Nauvoo temple ordinances, *Method Infinite* makes the bold claim that Joseph Smith’s central project throughout his life was “restoring ancient Freemasonry” and he “believed his life to be the latter-day point and purpose for which that worldview existed.”⁴ But, as in every work of

scholarship, that claim, like all others in the book, cannot stand on its own. Rather, it must be considered in light of the full spectrum of relevant information bearing on events, ideas, and their potential dependencies. Then, only after having considered in reasonable depth and breadth the entire ensemble of extant evidence, can scholars make the case for why their particular theory explains the most significant aspects of that body of data more completely and satisfactorily than the most likely competing hypotheses.

To help readers reach their own conclusions on the subject, I have summarized some of the most pertinent historical and source considerations relating to the origins of Latter-day Saint temple ordinances that are “missing” from the book in part three. I provide a simplified model illustrating the universe of possible dependencies among Freemasonry, the Bible, ancient sources, and nineteenth-century temple ordinances. To complete the picture, I summarize my personal judgments about the relative strengths of the similarities to and differences in the Nauvoo ordinances to these potential catalysts for temple-related revelations. In light of the results of comparative analysis, it is my view that while shared DNA between the rites of Freemasonry and those of modern temples is apparent — indicating both have some common ancestry in the Bible and also some nineteenth-century borrowing — Masonic and temple rituals are better characterized overall as distant cousins rather than members of the same nuclear family.

As a rationale for including what may seem to some readers a digression that goes beyond what is typical in a book review, I believe that helping readers of this essay become better acquainted with the tenets of comparative analysis sketched briefly in part three is valuable in its own right. I hope that exposure to the principles of comparative analysis will not only help them evaluate the comparisons between the ideas of Freemasonry and Latter-day Saint teachings made in *Method Infinite*, but that it will also serve the broader goal suggesting the kinds of improvements that could be made to the way scholars produce and readers evaluate comparative data that focuses on other important topics of Latter-day Saint history, theology, and scripture — thus, avoiding pitfalls and recognizing best practices.

By way of disclaimer, I should mention that I have recently written a book entitled *Freemasonry and the Origins of Latter-day Saint Temple Ordinances*,⁵ an expansion of a 2015 journal article⁶ I began to work on in the last half of 2021.⁷ After receiving a copy of *Method Infinite* earlier this year that was kindly provided by Loyd Ericson on behalf of Greg Kofford

Books, I decided that in addition to writing a detailed review of *Method Infinite*, it would be relatively easy to turn my research on Freemasonry and the temple to into a book — expecting that I would be able to finish both the book and the review before beginning a lengthy period of travel beginning at the end of July. Wanting to make sure that I represented both the subject matter and the views of the authors of *Method Infinite* accurately and fairly, I contacted Cheryl Bruno and Nicholas S. Literski and let them know about both efforts. During the initial writing of the book, they kindly gave significant feedback on the chapters and provided helpful perspectives and answers to questions I had along the way. They also generously granted permission to publish quotations from their book and excerpts from their private communications with me. Earlier conversations with Joe Steve Swick III during the writing of the previous journal article had also been very helpful and supportive. I am grateful for the resultant friendly dialogue with these three scholars throughout the writing process.

As will be seen in this lengthy review, *Method Infinite* addresses an impressive breadth of subjects, and in most cases I had to start my research and writing about these many topics from scratch. As the authors had done previously with the book, they graciously provided feedback on an early draft of this review and have also had an opportunity to read and correct errors in a near-final version of this review. However, they did not attempt to do a thorough reading of the review, and I accept full responsibility for any remaining errors. I appreciate not only the scholarship of these authors but also their examples of how dialogue on differences need not jeopardize mutual respect and collegiality. I am also grateful for the efforts of other unnamed friends who have contributed their perspectives to this review.

1. What's Good

The strongest portions of *Method Infinite* are those that draw directly from new discoveries and insights within the historical record — namely chapters 1, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, and 18. Notably, the book cites many primary sources that have not appeared in comparable works and, in other cases, makes important corrections to them. In these historical sections, the book supersedes the previous groundbreaking but now incomplete and dated studies of Michael W. Homer.⁸ These are what I see as the significant strengths of *Method Infinite* and what makes the book an important new study of the subject:

- Valuable overview of Freemasonry (chapter 1)

- Solid history of the “Morgan affair” (chapter 3)
- Well-documented account of the reorganization of the Illinois Grand Lodge (chapter 11)
- Nuanced account of the establishment and controversies of the Nauvoo Lodge (chapter 11)
- Relatively complete history of all the Latter-day Saint Lodges (chapter 13)
- Masonic themes and precedents in the history of the Relief Society (chapter 12)
- Aspects of the founding of Nauvoo, though overreaches on Masonic themes (chapter 10)
- Summary of the death and burial of Joseph Smith (chapter 17)
- Good account of Masonic and quasi-Masonic activities in Utah and elsewhere (chapter 18)
- Well-crafted prose
- Relatively few typos

Chapter 1 gives a valuable overview of Freemasonry, starting with its prehistory in the traditions of operative stonemasons and ending with its nineteenth-century manifestations in America. Chapter 3 continues the story by providing a solid history of what has become known as the “Morgan affair.” This incident had significant consequences for nineteenth-century Freemasonry, especially in the period immediately preceding the establishment of the Nauvoo Lodge. In brief, an anti-Mason named William Morgan mysteriously disappeared and was probably murdered in 1826. The disappearance of Morgan was widely blamed on the Masons and became an issue of national importance. The shadow that this accusation cast on the fraternity — when added to false rumors that Masonry’s secrets were part of a broader conspiracy to undermine American government and ideals — led to a precipitous decline of membership that lasted for nearly two decades.

Following a hiatus, the Illinois Grand Lodge was reestablished in 1840. By that time, public indignation about the Morgan affair had had time to fade. When the Saints made application for a Nauvoo lodge in 1841, the Grand Lodge was already beginning to grapple with tensions between Masons who favored aggressive regrowth of the fraternity in the state and those who saw the race to establish new lodges as courting various dangers to the integrity of the organization. Among other feared consequences of unchecked growth during this tumultuous time was the initiation of men who were unworthy or unprepared for membership. This accusation, among others, dogged the incredibly fast-growing

Latter-day Saint lodge in Nauvoo as well as additional Latter-day Saint lodges that eventually sprung up in the surrounding area.

Chapter 11 includes a well-documented account of the reorganization of the Illinois Grand Lodge. The chapter also chronicles the events that led to the establishment and initial controversies surrounding the Nauvoo Lodge. The authors provide a nuanced view of the accusations of Latter-day Saint apostate and critic John C. Bennett, distinguishing between those of Bennett's claims likely to be false or exaggerated and those that had a plausible basis in actual events.⁹

Chapter 13 continues the story of the Nauvoo Lodge and documents with great care the establishment of additional Latter-day Saint Lodges in the surrounding areas. The authors also discuss the dedication of the Nauvoo Masonic Hall and various proposals for the establishment of a "Mormon Grand Lodge" because of the Saints' sense of righteous indignation for the revocation of the provisional charter that had originally been granted to the Nauvoo Lodge.

In a notable contribution, chapter 12 reviews Masonic themes and precedents in the organization of the Relief Society, including a discussion of events relating to the introduction of plural marriage to various members of the society.

Chapter 10 is entitled "The Grand Design: Joseph's Masonic Kingdom on the Mississippi." The authors review the Saints' accomplishments in the founding of Nauvoo and in the politics, economic, education, and social aspects of the rapidly expanding city. Continuing the book's general penchant to view every development through the lens of Freemasonry,¹⁰ it argues that, in Nauvoo, the Prophet "began to move from a covert to a more overt Masonic model."¹¹ Regrettably, however, arguments that Joseph Smith was primarily following an "overt Masonic model" in his vision for Nauvoo are made without considering additional, significant crosscurrents discussed in other, broader histories of the Nauvoo period.¹²

Likewise, chapter 15, which provides a description of the "political kingdom of God," strives to tie Joseph Smith's inspiration for the Council of Fifty, the planned exodus to the West, and his candidacy for the United States presidency to his Masonic interests as a primary motive. Here, again, the argument would be more persuasive if additional perspectives on the dynamics at work in these councils had been included in the context of discussion and also evaluated for their merits.

Chapter 17 provides a summary of the death and burial of Joseph Smith. Commendably, it gives an excellent account of credible

Masonic connections (e.g., the words Joseph uttered just before he fell to his death from a window of the Carthage jail). However, some of the claims (e.g., efforts to relate Masonic legends about the death of Hiram Abiff thematically to the history of Joseph Smith's assassination) are pursued with less substantial evidence and arguments.

Largely breaking new ground, chapter 18 pulls together selected events relating to nineteenth-century Masonic and quasi-Masonic initiatives in Utah and within other branches of the Restoration that proliferated after the death of Joseph Smith. This chapter, pulling threads together from many scattered and little-known sources, is one of the most notable new research contributions of the book.

2. What's Questionable

In chapters 2, 4–8, and 14, we encounter evidence and arguments that are typically more questionable than those provided in the largely historical sections of the book. I have grouped the themes from these chapters into three sections — the first exploring the question of the importance of Freemasonry in Joseph Smith's early years, the second discussing Masonry and modern scripture, and the third dealing with temples and temple ordinances. Additional discussion of temple themes is found in part three of this review.

Table 1 summarizes selected examples that rely on the following faulty argumentation patterns that are repeated throughout the book. These include:

- *Advancing positions that lack strong evidence.* A straightforward example is when the book claims that in Cain's announcement, "I am free" (Moses 5:33), he was "apparently alluding to the Free-Mason."¹³ In such cases, the book merely asserts what, for the reader's sake, ought to be supported by specific evidence. As another simple instance, the book states, without convincing argumentation, that "the Masonic Enoch legend as described by George Oliver seems a likely source for Mormon teachings surrounding Adam-ondi-Ahman."¹⁴
- *Failing to engage with previous scholarship on relevant subjects.* For instance, the book advocates ideas originally proposed by John L. Brooke and Clyde R. Forsberg, Jr. that Joseph Smith's translations and teachings early on in his ministry should be characterized as part of his effort to reform "spurious" Masonry.¹⁵ However, the book fails to grapple with criticisms of Brooke's and Forsberg's approaches raised previously by Latter-

day Saint and non-Latter-day Saint scholars. Scholars can, of course, be forgiven for their initial impulse to avoid relying on the work of critical scholars who have themselves used weak and faulty argumentation, including sarcasm and ad hominem attacks, to advance their views. However, it is my opinion that no scholar can afford to ignore good arguments simply because of their source. This is true even when the authors of a given argument may not have deep expertise in Freemasonry. Indeed, what is wanting in most of the questionable arguments in *Method Infinite* is not more knowledge of Freemasonry — the book cannot generally be faulted in this regard — but rather better application of the principles of sound historical writing, comparative analysis, and in some cases (e.g., the Book of Abraham) specific knowledge from complementary fields of scholarship. In scholarly venues, good evidence and sound arguments for opposing views, regardless of their source, must be met with respectful responses so that the strengths and weaknesses of different views can be laid bare for all readers to see and evaluate for themselves.

- *Implicitly overstating resemblances to purported Masonic sources of influence by omitting mention of significant differences.* For example, the book describes some largely nonspecific similarities between Enoch's gold plate in the Masonic Royal Arch rite and the golden plates of the Book of Mormon. Disappointingly, however, it omits any discussion of the substantial *differences* between these plates and the underlying stories of their discovery that have been described in previous publications.¹⁶ Discussion of both similarities and differences is needed to assess the strength of a given claim of correspondence.
- *Ignoring pertinent, alternative correspondences outside of Freemasonry.* For instance, the book cites Masonic parallels to Joseph's kneeling and praying vocally prior to the First Vision but does not compare these gestures with general Christian prayer practices in Joseph Smith's milieu. Before drawing the conclusion that the Prophet was acting more in the role of a proto-Mason than of a typical Christian, the relative strength of each of these competing hypotheses would need to be considered.

- *Occasionally introducing idiosyncratic errors of other kinds.* For example, on p. 164 the authors say they are citing Joseph Smith’s “diary” from July 14, 1835, when the text was actually composed at least eight years after the dated entry.¹⁷ As another example, the book mistakenly identifies a figure in Book of Abraham Facsimile 2 as having “his right arm ... ‘raised to the square,’ surmounted by a pair of compasses”¹⁸ and incorrectly includes “square and compasses” and “penalties”¹⁹ as Masonic items that were included in Joseph Smith’s explanations of the facsimiles. Such errors should not be dismissed as simple differences of opinions but rather are the kinds of things that can be minimized through careful reading of primary sources and familiarity with current scholarship in the relevant disciplines.

Table 1. Selected Examples of Questionable Arguments.

	Positions weakly supported	Arguments of others unmentioned	Significant differences downplayed	Alternative resemblances downplayed	Errors of other kinds
Joseph Smith’s Early Life (chs. 2, 4)					
Treasure-seeking and Royal Arch Masonry	✓				
The First Vision and Masonic ritual	✓			✓	
Modern Scripture (chs. 5–7)					
<i>The Book of Mormon</i>					
Spurious Masonry in Book of Mormon and life of JS	✓	✓		✓	
Plate of Enoch and golden plates of Book of Mormon	✓	✓	✓		
Masonic themes and Book of Mormon translation	✓				
Masonry and Anti-Masonry in the Book of Mormon		✓			
<i>The Book of Moses</i>					
Creation from unorganized matter				✓	
Teachings of the angel to Adam and Eve	✓			✓	
Oaths and naming of Cain	✓			✓	
Book of Moses account of Enoch			✓	✓	
<i>The Doctrine and Covenants</i>					
The Saints John	✓				
Keys	✓			✓	

	Positions weakly supported	Arguments of others unmentioned	Significant differences downplayed	Alternative resemblances downplayed	Errors of other kinds
Degrees of glory	✓			✓	
Receiving the fulness	✓			✓	
The “celestial lodge”	✓			✓	
Adam-ondi-Ahman	✓		✓	✓	
Eternal matter	✓			✓	
Eternal bonds	✓			✓	
<i>The Book of Abraham</i>					
Translation vs. “midrash”	✓	✓			
Priesthood authority	✓				
Spirits and intelligences	✓				✓
The divine council the Book of Abraham	✓			✓	
<i>Book of Abraham Facsimiles and KEP</i>					
History of the facsimiles	✓	✓			✓
Facsimile 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Facsimile 2	✓	✓		✓	
Facsimile 3	✓	✓			✓
Kirtland Egyptian Papers	✓	✓			✓
Temples (chs. 8, 14)					
<i>Kirtland Period</i>					
Overall Kirtland Temple design and supervision	✓		✓		
Kirtland Temple cornerstone laying	✓		✓		
Kirtland Temple pulpits	✓		✓	✓	
Kirtland ritual greetings, washings, and anointings	✓		✓	✓	
Hosanna shout	✓		✓	✓	
Passing of the temple veils in Kirtland	✓		✓		
<i>Nauvoo Period</i>					
Sacred garments			✓	✓	
High-priestly clothing			✓	✓	
Ritual ascent			✓	✓	
Quorum of the Anointed	✓				✓
Nauvoo Temple architecture and furnishings	✓		✓	✓	

Chapters 2 and 4: How Important Was Freemasonry to Joseph Smith Early in His Life?

The general premise of chapter 2 is sound — namely that Joseph Smith’s first encounters with Freemasonry occurred long before he came to Nauvoo. Indeed, it may be said that the Prophet, like many Americans of his era, “grew up around Masonry. His older brother Hyrum ... was a Mason in the 1820s,²⁰ as were many of the Smiths’ neighbors. ... To not be at least dimly aware of Masonry in western New York in the middle to late 1820s was impossible.”²¹

That said, exactly what Joseph Smith knew about the specifics of the *rituals* of Freemasonry and when he came to know these details is a debated question. A ready source of information about Masonry for the young Prophet would have been the exposés of the anti-Masonic movement, whose epicenter was not far from the Smith home. He undoubtedly talked with his friends and family about Masonic ideas and controversies — including the Morgan affair.²² Moreover, enlightenment ideals cherished by Freemasonry were certainly in the air. But the book does not support its claims that the Smith family’s early treasure-seeking practices and the First Vision were based on Freemasonry with convincing evidence.

Were the Smith family’s early treasure-seeking practices modeled on the rites of Royal Arch Masonry?

After a lengthy description of treasure-seeking, the book cites an 1875 newspaper article containing the statement that treasure-seeking might be seen by believers as “an allegory practically expressed of a searcher after truth.”²³ From this single general assertion the book leaps to the claim that the “Smiths’ treasure seeking activities” were “similar to how they appear in Masonic ritual.”²⁴

However, those who are familiar with the rites of Royal Arch Masonry will know that the most interesting details of the practices of New England treasure-seekers are not found in the ritual drama of the relevant Masonic legend. That is not to say that there is no connection between the *magical* practices of treasure-digging and *Masonry* broadly speaking — indeed, this relationship invokes a complex and important subject that deserves a more thorough and up-to-date treatment of its own. However, in my view, the book fails to make a strong case for its claim of a meaningful connection between the details of treasure-digging and the specifics of what is described in relevant Masonic *ritual*

and legend. See more about the differences between the story of Enoch's plate and the story of the Book of Mormon golden plates below.

Was the First Vision modeled on Masonic ritual?

Equally problematic are the book's claims in chapter 4 that the First Vision was "a literal manifestation of the Masonic initiation ritual,"²⁵ including "elements of the archetype that he used to share the experience [that] came from his exposure to Freemasonry."²⁶ For example, the book seeks to compare the general theme of "confusion and strife amongst the different denominations" experienced by the Prophet prior to his retiring to the grove in prayer to "Masonic allegory" that "similarly traces man's initial spiritual darkness and subsequent search for illumination" as it is manifested in the Masonic practice of the "'hoodwink' of cloth or leather that is placed over the candidate's eyes" in which "Freemasonry undertakes to remove ... human unawareness of spiritual truth."²⁷ Here, as frequently elsewhere in the book, the parallels hold in only a very general way, while details specific to Masonry lack convincing correspondences across Joseph Smith's varying accounts.

In the book's repeated efforts to tie events of Joseph Smith's life with Freemasonry in near cradle-to-grave extent, even the most mundane details of the First Vision account do not escape claims of Masonic influence. Of course, there is nothing wrong in itself with undertaking detailed examination of this sort. However, Occam's razor is brazenly defied when specific Masonic influence is attributed to details that are more easily explained as coming from the Christian milieu in which Joseph Smith was raised. For example, "the detail that Smith knelt as he prayed"²⁸ is compared to two references to kneeling prayer in Masonic ritual without mentioning the more likely inspiration for both the Masonic gesture and the Prophet's personal experience being that kneeling in prayer has been a common practice for Christians since the time of Christ.²⁹

Similarly, the book parallels the fact that the Masonic initiate may "make a personal oblation, either silently or vocally, as he prefers" with "Smith's confession that his experience in the grove was the first time he had attempted to pray vocally."³⁰ No attempt is made to justify why the option of praying vocally is a distinctive feature of Masonry rather than merely a common element of Christian prayer practices in Joseph Smith's time. It should be further observed that Masonic legend and ritual makes no effort to hide, and often explicitly cites, biblical precedents for its elements.

Joseph Smith's understanding of the temple developed over decades. But it is almost as if he had a vision of the whole before him from the very beginning of his ministry. Indeed, Don Bradley has argued that the First Vision was Joseph Smith's initiation as a seer and constituted a kind of heavenly endowment. Acknowledging that the earliest extant account of the First Vision does not appear to modern readers to be anything like an endowment experience, Bradley writes:

Smith's vision looks like a typical conversion vision of Jesus (insofar as a Christophany can be typical — that is, it shares a common pattern) when the account from his most "Protestant" phase is used and is set only in the context of revivalism. Yet there is no reason to limit analysis only to that account and that context. All accounts, and not only the earliest, provide evidence for the character of the original experience. Indeed, literary scholars Neal Lambert and Richard Cracroft have argued from their comparison of the respectively constrained and free-flowing styles of the 1832 and 1838 accounts that the former attempts to contain the new wine of Smith's theophany in an old wineskin of narrative convention.³¹ While the 1838 telling, in which the experience is both a conversion and a prophetic calling, is straightforward and natural, the 1832 account seems formal and forced, as if young Smith's experience was ready to burst the old wineskin or had been shoehorned into a revivalistic conversion narrative five sizes too small.³²

Noting that "latter-day revelation gives us the fuller account and meaning of what actually took place" on Mount Sinai when Moses experienced a heavenly ascent that took him into the presence of the Lord,³³ Elder Alvin R. Dyer wrote that it was "similar to that which was experienced by Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove."³⁴ Thus, one might more fruitfully compare Joseph Smith's personal experiences with visions and revelations to the heavenly ascents of ancient prophets such as Enoch, Moses, Abraham, and the brother of Jared than to either nineteenth-century revivalist visions of God or the allegories of Masonic ritual.³⁵

Chapters 5–7: Masonry and Modern Scripture

With respect to the relationship of Masonry and modern scripture, the book makes the following bold claim:

Because the building blocks of his work were typically Masonic beliefs that permeated his environment, Masonic-like expansions are found in every Mormon scripture from the Book of Mormon to Joseph Smith's inspired revision of the Bible, and from the Doctrine and Covenants to the Book of Abraham. Numerous ideas from these works that Latter-day Saints have come to believe are uniquely Mormon have antecedents in popular Masonic sources of Smith's day.³⁶

Below, the discussion of examples drawn from the book demonstrates that this claim is overstated.

Suggestions of Masonic Themes in the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon

The history of the Book of Mormon given in chapter 5 begins with common tropes relating to treasure-digging and magical practices. However, because the book does not explicitly connect these themes to Freemasonry, I will say no more about them here.

That said, the book does go on to advance the claim that the “accounts of the recovery of the golden plates are intimately connected with the backstory of the Royal Arch Degree.”³⁷ *Method Infinite* characterizes the discovery of the Book of the Law³⁸ described in the Bible and taken up in the legends and rites of Freemasonry as a “restoration of true religion,” purportedly making the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon “archetypally Masonic” and “a fulfillment of Masonic expectations.”³⁹ In the following sections I discuss the strength of this claim.

To what extent can Joseph Smith's life and translation of the Book of Mormon be seen as a fulfillment of Masonic expectations — in particular, as a reformation of “spurious” Masonry?

Before reaching chapter 5, the reader has already been introduced to the book's argument that the Book of Mormon — and, indeed, all the key events in Joseph Smith's life and teachings — are best understood through the lens of Masonry. Chapter 1 summarizes the ideas of Christian Freemasons such as William Hutchinson, George Oliver, and Salem Town that imaginatively posited a conflict between “authentic” and “spurious” Masonry that purportedly dated back to the time of the earliest Old Testament patriarchs.⁴⁰

The argument that the primary impetus for Joseph Smith's religious life was to reform “spurious” Masonry is arguably the predominant theme of the entire book. The roots of this idea date back at least to a 1994

volume by John L. Brooke.⁴¹ Unfortunately, *Method Infinite* makes no mention of the problematic aspects of Brooke's arguments that have been raised by several Latter-day Saint and non-Latter-day Saint scholars.⁴² A similar argument to Brooke's, positing that Oliver's refashioning of G. S. Faber's account of the origin of pagan idolatry made its way into the Book of Mormon, later appeared in the widely criticized 2004 book on Freemasonry among the Latter-day Saints by Clyde R. Forsberg, Jr.⁴³

It is important to know that the arguments about the early relevance of Oliver's "authentic" and "spurious" Masonry that were raised by Brooke, continued by Forsberg, and revived in *Method Infinite* are modern inventions that, so far as I am aware, are not backed by any nineteenth-century statements by Joseph Smith or anyone else. Though Joseph Smith was aware of Freemasonry from a young age and the establishment of the fraternity certainly became an important element of the Prophet's plans in Nauvoo, the book does not provide compelling evidence from Joseph Smith's early ministry (or later) that he presented himself as a "Masonic restorer."⁴⁴

Instead, his life and mission were invariably couched in sermons and scripture as a realization of the prophecies of biblical figures⁴⁵ rather than as "a fulfillment of Masonic expectations."⁴⁶ The coming forth of the record of the Nephites was similarly envisioned as a confirmation of biblical prophecy.⁴⁷ As to the purpose of the Book of Mormon, the climax of its preface explicitly informs us that it was written to convince "the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself to all nations."

How similar are Masonic legends relating to the finding of the plate of Enoch to the discovery of the golden plates of the Book of Mormon?

Although the book describes some loose similarities, it offers no nineteenth-century evidence that Saints, skeptics, or Masons in Joseph Smith's day saw noteworthy resemblances between the actual historical events of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the ritual-related legends of Freemasonry.

In addition, in making its claims, the book fails to cite scholars who have previously questioned the strength of supposed resemblances between the plate of Enoch (described in Masonic legends but not an explicit part of the Royal Arch degree at the time of Joseph Smith⁴⁸) and the plates of the Book of Mormon. For example, William J. Hamblin, Daniel C. Peterson, and George L. Mitton have noted that⁴⁹

the differences between the two stories are far greater than the alleged similarities: Enoch is not mentioned in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. The main Enochian text is inscribed on a stone pillar⁵⁰ [an idea that the Masons derived and elaborated from Jewish and early Christian traditions⁵¹], not on golden plates. The gold plate in the Enoch story was a single inscriptional plate, not a book; it was triangular rather than rectangular; and it contained the ineffable name of God, which plays no role in the Book of Mormon story.⁵² ... Joseph's golden plates were in a small stone box, while Enoch built a huge underground temple complex with "nine arches" and a huge "door of stone."⁵³ And whereas the Book of Mormon is composed of history and sermons, Enoch's pillar contains "the principles of the liberal arts, particularly of masonry."⁵⁴

Are there Masonic parallels to the seer stones, spectacles, and the Urim and Thummim used in the translation of the Book of Mormon?

In relation to this question, the book points out that the Masons, like many Christians of their day who were attracted to esoteric themes, were interested in biblical and other accounts relating to such artifacts. The book then attempts to connect the literal key used to open the "ark of the covenant" in Masonic legend and the key for the cipher used to read Enoch's gold plate by relying on a single mention by Joseph Smith that the spectacles or Urim and Thummim constituted a "key" by which he could both translate and also "ascertain the approach of danger either to himself or the record."⁵⁵ Any reader who could be persuaded that the slender thread of this remark might be adequate to suspend a heavier argument should also be reminded that there is nothing uniquely Masonic about the use of the term "key" in any of these usages.⁵⁶

Claims that the Book of Mormon is a Masonic or Anti-Masonic "Bible."

The question of whether the Book of Mormon is "Masonic" or "Anti-Masonic" has been a debated theme. Most scholars agree with Martin Harris, who called the Book of Mormon an "anti-masonick Bible."⁵⁷ By way of contrast, *Method Infinite* disputes "the common assumption that [Joseph] Smith drastically reversed his views of Masonry over time from being 'anti-Masonic' during the period of the [Book of Mormon] translation to fully adopting Masonry in the final years of his life."⁵⁸

Personally, I acknowledge the importance of the views of those who, at the time of the book's publication, saw its potential influence for good or evil as a function of whether it was perceived as siding with or arguing against the Masons. However, the issue of Masonry in the Book of Mormon bears not only on how it was received by readers but also on how it was produced by Joseph Smith.

For instance, those who believe the Prophet was entirely bound to a character-by-character, word-by-word reproduction of the source text as described by David Whitmer,⁵⁹ any suggestion that Masonic vocabulary made its way into the Book of Mormon contradicts the view of the book as an ancient work. However, what evidence exists seems consistent with Brant Gardner's view that the English translation of the Book of Mormon more often than not exhibits functionalist rather than literalist equivalence with the original record. In other words, "unless a very specific, detailed textual analysis supports an argument that particular words or passages are either literalist or conceptual," Gardner favors the idea that Joseph Smith's translation "adheres to the organization and structures of the original [plate text] but is more flexible in the vocabulary."⁶⁰

Importantly, even in those instances where the Prophet's Book of Mormon translation seems to have reproduced archaic literary features of the original plate text (which some scholars take as evidence that Joseph Smith was "reading" rather than composing his dictations⁶¹), the historical record suggests that ensuring a divinely adequate English expression of the Nephite source was an exhausting effort that is better described in terms of active, immersive spiritual engagement than as passive reception and recital.⁶² In that light, it may be significant that the Book of Mormon itself refers to the process of rendering a text from one language to another under divine direction — whatever the exact nature of that process ultimately turns out to be⁶³ — more frequently as "interpretation" than as "translation."⁶⁴ As Kathleen Flake puts it, Joseph Smith did not see himself merely as "God's stenographer. Rather, he was an *interpreting* reader, and God the confirming authority."⁶⁵

To sum up, even though I see the claims of direct influence of modern Freemasonry on its account as unlikely, the evidence of modern scholarship leads to the view that in Joseph Smith's divinely inspired translation of the Book of Mormon, there is room for the introduction of vocabulary and phraseology that was not, strictly speaking, present on the gold plates.

In any event, my view is that believers in the antiquity of the Book of Mormon like Martin Harris as well as skeptics who see it as a modern production err — or at least overstate the case — when they characterize the book either as a pro-Masonic or anti-Masonic Bible. This is because, although there are some terms and themes scattered throughout the five-hundred pages or so of the Book of Mormon that can be easily imagined as relating in some way or another to Freemasonry, these ideas can hardly be thought of as the account’s predominant message.

Three items are frequently cited by proponents of Masonic influence in the Book of Mormon:

1. The use of the term “secret combinations”
2. Satan’s use of a flaxen cord to lead the wicked, and
3. Lamb-skin aprons of the Gadianton robbers.

So much ink has been spilled on these three items already that I think I can add little to the discussion except to refer the reader to representative studies that reach conclusions different from the book.⁶⁶ Disappointingly, *Method Infinite* does not mention previous research on these issues by other scholars, leaving the typical reader with the impression that the views and arguments presented in the book are unprecedented and unopposed.

Going further, however — to the credit of the authors — chapter 6 extends the discussions of Masonry in the Book of Mormon beyond the three common items to include more rarely explored topics. For example, it mentions Book of Mormon passages drawing on biblical and Jewish sources that refer to the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, traditions about beheading and “smiths,” themes about lineage and language, the shining stones of the Jaredite barges,⁶⁷ passing through the veil,⁶⁸ bees,⁶⁹ and the titles of “prophet, priest, and king.”⁷⁰ However, when read in light of the important body of Latter-day Saint scholarship on these issues that goes unmentioned in the book,⁷¹ the discussion of these topics in *Method Infinite* actually strengthen arguments that the Book of Mormon is more strongly ancient and biblical than Masonic.

Proposed Allusions to Freemasonry in the Book of Moses

As evidence of Masonic influence, the authors cite Joseph Smith’s teachings about creation from unorganized matter, the teachings of the angel to Adam and Eve about animal sacrifice (Moses 5:6–7), the oaths and naming of Cain as “Master Mahan” (Moses 5:29–31, 49–51), and the Joseph Smith account of Enoch (Moses 6–7).

Creation from unorganized matter (Moses 2:1–2; Genesis 1:1–2; Abraham 4:1–2)

The book rightly observes that Masonic texts published in Joseph Smith’s era state that the earth was originally “without form or distinction” or that it went from “chaos to perfection.”⁷² However, these ideas are not specific to Masonry. Rather, they are common themes in scholarly exegesis of Genesis 1:2 based on the underlying Hebrew of “without form and void.”⁷³ That said, what is more significant in Joseph Smith’s teachings are statements where he went beyond standard Bible commentaries of his day to argue that the word “created” should be rendered “formed, or organized”⁷⁴ Though these additional teachings currently appear to be unknown in nineteenth-century Freemasonry, they resonate with contemporary Bible scholarship.⁷⁵

Teachings of the angel to Adam and Eve (Moses 5:6–8)

The book correctly observes that “the idea that sacrificial animals were first introduced to Adam as a representation of the Lamb of God is in accordance with popular Bible commentaries of the time.”⁷⁶ Hence, these teachings are not indicative of specific Masonic influence. However, research by Latter-day Saint scholar David Calabro goes further in indicating the ritual basis for Jewish and early Christian elaborations of stories of Adam and Eve.⁷⁷ Unlike the few and brief mentions in the legends and rites of Freemasonry that focus more on the Fall than on the Redemption of Adam and Eve, the context of the Adam and Eve account given in the temple endowment bears strong resemblance to these early Christian precedents.

Oaths and naming of Cain as “Master Mahan” (Moses 5:29–31).

As to the oaths and self-imprecations of those who lived before the Flood mentioned by the authors, see, for example, the similar language in 1 Enoch,⁷⁸ which the book rightly concludes “may have been available on the western frontier by 1830.”⁷⁹ With much less warrant, however, the book goes on to claim that in Cain’s announcement, “I am free” (Moses 5:33), he was “apparently alluding to the Free-Mason.”⁸⁰

With respect to the reference to “Master Mahan” in the Book of Moses (5:49), the book supposes that “Master Mahan” is a simple corruption of “Master Mason.” Commendably, the older work of Hugh Nibley⁸¹ and D. Michael Quinn⁸² are mentioned by the book as advocating ancient derivations of the term as a competing hypothesis.⁸³ Regrettably, however, the authors did not also consult more recent work by scholars

on this question.⁸⁴ For example, as Stephen O. Smoot observes, there is a perfectly good Semitic etymology for “Mahan,” namely “Hebrew *māḥā* (‘to wipe out, annihilate’), which would be thematically consistent with Cain’s declaration at Moses 5:31.”⁸⁵ For that matter, a similar use is attested in Genesis 4:18 in the name Mehujael and in later appearances of a related verb in Genesis 6 and 7.⁸⁶

Book of Moses account of Enoch (Moses 6:22–8:2)

The book examines possible nineteenth-century sources for the Enoch account in chapters 6 and 7 of Joseph Smith’s Book of Moses. While not dismissing the possibility that *1 Enoch* was available to Joseph Smith, it correctly discounts the idea that Moses 6–7 was inspired by *1 Enoch*,⁸⁷ the only significant ancient Enoch account Joseph Smith could have known directly in his environment. Instead, it (incorrectly) argues — after having examined what it considers to be the “many similarities” between Moses 6–7, Freemasonry, and ancient sources — that “Smith’s Enoch most closely resembles that of the Masonic legend.”⁸⁸

Elsewhere, I have published one of two brief and highly similar texts of the Masonic Enoch legend cited in *Method Infinite* so readers can compare it to the Book of Moses Enoch chapters for themselves.⁸⁹ I have also described many ancient affinities to the ancient Enoch literature, in particular the significant Dead Sea Scrolls work entitled *The Book of Giants*.⁹⁰ These additional, ancient sources, which Joseph Smith could not have known, closely parallel Joseph Smith’s Enoch account almost from start to finish.

By way of contrast, a reading of the Masonic Enoch legend will reveal that most of the resemblances to the Book of Moses Enoch — for example, the degeneracy of mankind, a call to preach, a gathering of prophets, a vision on a mountain, a divine transfiguration — are of a general nature, common to several Old Testament prophets. On the other hand, most of the unusual features of the Masonic story — for example, the recovery of the sacred name or word, the building of a subterranean temple, a golden triangle containing ineffable characters, the erecting of marble and brass pillars — are absent from Moses 6–7.

The Doctrine and Covenants

The book’s discussion of the Doctrine and Covenants confidently claims that many of its sections “included Masonically inspired midrash.” However, from the points discussed below readers will see that most of

the examples given in the book have greater affinity to the Bible than to Masonry.

The Saints John (D&C 7; 84:27–28)

After a brief explanation of the importance of John the Baptist and John the Beloved in Freemasonry, the authors claim that “Joseph Smith’s writings show a familiarity with the Masonic veneration of the ‘Saints John.’”⁹¹ As evidence, they cite two Doctrine and Covenants passages: (1) the revelatory expansion of John 20:21–23 in section 7 describing the Apostle John’s mission to tarry on earth till Christ comes, and (2) the verses 27–28 of section 84 describing John the Baptist’s ordination to the lesser priesthood that was restored at the time of Joseph Smith. The authors conclude, without specific warrant or further argument, that “these two sections of the Doctrine of Covenants provide examples of Joseph Smith’s use of the Masonic concepts of a bifurcated Priesthood, restoration, and the Saints John in order to create a distinctive Mormon midrash.”⁹² However, the book does not identify anything distinctively Masonic in either of these revelations other than the names of “John,” and neither revelation provides evidence of any special joint “Masonic veneration” of the “Saints John” among the Latter-day Saints.

Keys (D&C 6:28; 7:7; 13:1; 27:5–6, 9, 12, 13; 28:7; 35:18, etc.)

The book tries to connect the visual symbol of the “key” in Masonry, signifying secrecy, to statements by Joseph Smith about secrecy — one of which explicitly refers to Freemasonry. But, despite the focus on the claim of Masonic influence in the Doctrine and Covenants in this section of the book, no specific scriptural references are given as examples of instances where the term “keys” refers to “secrets”⁹³ rather than to priesthood authority — as in the well-known New Testament example of Matthew 16:18–19 and in Doctrine and Covenants verses that specifically equate keys to “authority.”⁹⁴ In addition, even if examples from the Doctrine and Covenants equating “keys” to “secrets” had been provided in *Method Infinite*, it should be noted that *none* of the senses of the term “key” in Joseph Smith’s time and place is unique to Masonry.⁹⁵

Degrees of Glory (D&C 76)

After describing section 76, which details the three kingdoms of glory, the book includes a paragraph from the Christian Mason George Oliver.⁹⁶ Oliver cites biblical verses referring to the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2), differences in glory (1 Corinthians 15:41), and many mansions

(John 14:2). However, these New Testament passages were also well-known to other Christians in Joseph Smith's day. The brief comment by Oliver from a Masonic work that follows adds little to the obvious general meaning of the verses and contains nothing that is specifically relevant to the highly detailed requirements and blessings described in section 76 itself.

Receiving the Fulness (D&C 93:12)

The book mentions D&C 93:12, which details how the fulness is not received all at once, but rather from "grace to grace." As evidence that the revelation is influenced by Freemasonry, it summarizes a general concept found in some Masonic writings that "men are brought to the truth by receiving 'light' or knowledge progressively."⁹⁷ Of course, the idea of incremental acquisition of knowledge is neither novel nor unique to Freemasonry. Indeed, the expression of this idea in D&C 93:12 is more similar to a New Testament verse, John 1:16, that is not mentioned in the discussion within *Method Infinite*: "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

Celestial Lodge (D&C 93:22)

The book cites the Masonic term "celestial lodge" to describe the intimate fellowship of the faithful in heaven after death.⁹⁸ While a loving community of a similar nature is envisioned by most Christians, the book does not demonstrate that the term "celestial lodge" is used in Latter-day Saint teachings or scripture. Lacking an exact equivalent of the term in the Doctrine and Covenants or anywhere else in modern scripture, the book attempts to equate the Masonic concept of a "celestial lodge" to D&C 93:22, which refers to "the church of the Firstborn." Surprisingly, however, while arguing for Masonic influence on D&C 93:22 from the non-scriptural term "celestial lodge," the book fails to consider the influence of the context surrounding the identical biblical phrase "church of the Firstborn" that appears in Hebrews 12:23.

Adam-ondi-Ahman (D&C 116)

The book correctly notes the historical and eschatological importance of the gathering of Adam's posterity at Adam-ondi-Ahman as described in D&C 116. What it fails to do is to provide adequate justification for the conclusion that "the Masonic Enoch legend as described by George Oliver seems a likely source for Mormon teachings surrounding Adam-ondi-Ahman."⁹⁹

As in previous instances of claimed parallels of Masonic literature to Latter-day Saint scripture and ritual, there are more differences than similarities. In the Masonic legend, it is Enoch rather than Adam who initiates the gathering, the assembly is characterized as a “special assembly of Masons” in which Enoch presides rather than a calling together of Adam and Eve’s children in which Adam takes center stage, rather than focusing on an enumeration of the “enormous evils which were desolating the earth” in which Enoch “implored their advice and assistance in stemming the torrent of impiety which threatened an universal corruption,”¹⁰⁰ the purpose of the gathering was to give Adam and Eve’s posterity a patriarchal blessing.¹⁰¹ Rather than culminating in a “terrible prophecy, that all mankind, except a few just persons” would die by water and fire (necessitating the building of Enoch’s legendary nine-arched temple),¹⁰² the gathering culminated in a moment of supernal glory when “the Lord appeared in their midst.”¹⁰³ No mention is made in Masonic sources about a future eschatological reunion at Adam-ondi-Ahman.

Readers will find accounts that are more similar to the gathering of Adam and Eve’s children described by the Prophet in early Christian literature than they will discover in the Masonic tradition.¹⁰⁴

Eternal Matter (D&C 130:22; 131:7)

The book cites William Hutchinson’s 1775 Masonic work stating that “matter . . . was eternal” in connection with Joseph Smith’s statement “the pure principles of element are principles which can never be destroyed.”¹⁰⁵ It should be noted that a belief in these statements at this time was not unique to Masonry or Joseph Smith since the principles of conservation of mass had already been established by the eighteenth century. However, the book omits discussion of the more remarkable and original teaching of Joseph Smith that *everything* is matter.¹⁰⁶ In other words, as Latter-day Saint astrophysicist Ron Hellings has written: “Whatever Joseph meant by ‘matter,’ it is clear he meant that nothing else exists.”¹⁰⁷ Though the concept that “everything is matter” currently appears to be absent from the literature of nineteenth-century Freemasonry, it seems to resonate with modern inflationary cosmology.¹⁰⁸

Eternal Bonds (D&C 128:18; 132:6–21)

The book compares a Masonic statement that speaks of science and knowledge that “link mankind together in the indissoluble chain of sincere affection” to the “welding link” available in Latter-day Saint priesthood ordinances. While both groups embodied the New Testament ideal of

“brotherly love”¹⁰⁹ and while Joseph Smith appreciated the emphasis of Masonry on certain “grand fundamental principles,¹¹⁰” it is assuming too much to explain the Latter-day Saint “doctrine of eternal union through the priesthood” as something that “evolved” from “Masonic principles.”¹¹¹ It seems likely that most Christians of Joseph Smith’s day, including Christian Masons, would have ascribed the human yearning for peace on earth and continuing sociality in heaven as germinating in the basic tenets of Christianity rather than as a development that owed its genesis to Freemasonry

The Book of Abraham

Translation or imaginative “midrash”?

In chapter 7, the focus turns to the Book of Abraham. The chapter subtitle “Advancing the Interests of True Masonry” hearkens back to the book’s pervasive theme of Joseph Smith as “a Masonic restorer, bringing to light the heretofore concealed Masonic and priestly mysteries”¹¹² in the Book of Abraham. As in previous applications of this theme to the work of Joseph Smith, the book provides no evidence that the Prophet or his contemporaries considered him to be “a Masonic restorer” as he took up the production of what perhaps became his most controversial book of modern scripture. Rather, he consistently claimed he was translating, or revealing, an ancient record from Abraham — and both Joseph Smith’s supporters and detractors took this self-characterization of what he understood the Book of Abraham to be at face value.

Commendably, the book cites multiple examples of the spectrum of opinions relating to the production of the Book of Abraham text,¹¹³ including the missing papyrus theory,¹¹⁴ the “mnemonic device” theory,¹¹⁵ and what is often called the “catalyst theory.”¹¹⁶ However, as is also evident in the book’s discussions of other works of modern scripture, the premise that the Book of Abraham “was influenced by nineteenth-century Freemasonry”¹¹⁷ contradicts the consensus of professionally trained Latter-day Saint Egyptologists who have concluded on the basis of extensive corroborative evidence that the Book of Abraham derives from authentic, ancient records.¹¹⁸ Disappointingly, the book fails to engage with the substantive body of research cited by these scholars. Instead, as will be further exemplified below, it simplistically asserts that Joseph Smith “selectively took [allegorical] Masonic stories or traditions” and transformed them “into literal or factual spiritual history.”¹¹⁹

In further support of the book's premise that the Book of Abraham was a fully nineteenth-century development, readers are asked to accept the following statement: "Although some authors exult in pointing out the similarities of Mormon scripture, especially the Book of Abraham, with the ancient past, one must follow the chain of influence from the closest to the furthest out."¹²⁰ But why? If Joseph Smith was translating or revealing an actual ancient text from Abraham, then one must do nothing of the sort. On the contrary, if the Book of Abraham is what Joseph Smith professed it to be, then seeking nineteenth-century Masonic parallels and preferring those over ancient parallels is exactly methodologically backwards. This comment only makes sense if one already assumes the Book of Abraham is a modern text.

By means of a series of such assertions, the book ignores historical evidence that indicates Joseph Smith viewed his work as translation of an ancient record in favor of an unsupported and narrow view of the development of the Book of Mormon, the Book of Moses, and the Book of Abraham as a process of purely imaginative midrash undertaken in an attempt to "resolve problems" within "difficult passages of the Hebrew Bible."¹²¹ Rather than uncritically adopting this older, more constricted view of scriptural expansion, readers should consult the more up-to-date views on "midrash" summarized by scholars such as Avram Shannon.¹²²

The question of priesthood authority (Abraham 1:26)

With respect to the question of priesthood authority, the book merely asserts what it is attempting to prove: "Through this story [in Abraham 1:26], Smith reveals both his attitude toward the contemporary and spurious craft of Masonry and his reliance upon George Oliver's 'two traditions' theory."¹²³ The book provides no evidence for this assertion other than the earlier claims that build on the discredited arguments of Brooke and Forsberg described above. Moreover, I see no hint in the Book of Abraham text or anything from Joseph Smith's comments on the text that makes it obvious that Pharaoh's imitation priesthood was thought to have anything to do with Freemasonry.

The book goes on to say: "Assuming that Smith's midrash is meant to address the issue of Masonic authority, it warns that Freemasons may be righteous and good men, but at best, they can only imitate that ancient order that is the property of the holy priesthood."¹²⁴ Yes, if we *assume* a connection with Freemasonry, then we can somehow turn the Book of Abraham's teachings about priesthood into a coded cipher about Masonry. But why should we make this assumption?

Spirits and intelligences (Abraham 3:22–23)

The book describes the Book of Abraham's views on spirits and intelligences as "a tripartite theory of spirit creation. In this theory, intelligence exists in non-created form unorganized into a spirit being by God. The spirit can then inhabit a human body and become a mortal being."¹²⁵ However, there is no evidence that Joseph Smith ever taught this tripartite creation sequence.¹²⁶ And it's not obvious that the Book of Abraham teaches this either. "Spirits," "souls," and "intelligences" seem to be used synonymously in the Book of Abraham, unlike how these terms have sometimes been used by later Latter-day Saint writers. Likewise, a quick check of the 1828 Webster dictionary would have revealed that the book's quotes from Masonic writer Will Hutchinson reflect the use of "intelligences" as a common way of speaking about "spiritual beings" rather than as a special notion reflecting specific Latter-day Saint teachings.¹²⁷

The divine council (Abraham 3:22–28)

Pertaining to the book's discussion of the Grand Council, Stephen O. Smoot,¹²⁸ David E. Bokovoy,¹²⁹ and Terryl L Givens,¹³⁰ among others,¹³¹ have shown how the Book of Abraham's depiction of the divine council fits perfectly in a biblical and ancient Near Eastern perspective. There is no need to resort to vague Masonic parallels. The ancient parallels are indisputable and, as mentioned in the book itself, the idea can be easily discerned in the Bible itself.¹³²

Dating and Descriptions of the Facsimiles and the KEP

In this section, the book states that Joseph Smith's journal entry for October 1, 1835, is "evidently"¹³³ referring to the bound grammar ("Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language"). This assertion ignores John Gee's well-reasoned arguments that in fact this entry is referring to the three documents Joseph, Phelps, and Cowdery worked on together called "Egyptian alphabet," which is not the bound grammar.¹³⁴ More generally, with respect to the descriptions and translations of the Joseph Smith papyri, the book cites Klaus Baer's outdated 1968 translation of the Joseph Smith Papyri¹³⁵ and does not mention Michael Rhodes' or Robert Ritner's better translations from the past decade.¹³⁶

The section concludes with this statement: "Thus, the facsimiles' connection of Abraham with the patriarchal priesthood and with a knowledge of astronomy *persuasively* derives from Freemasonry and

substantially dates from 1835.”¹³⁷ As seen above, the section offers only assertions, not carefully argued evidence, in support of both claims.

Facsimile 1

The authors attempt to make a connection between Facsimile 1 and Freemasonry by citing Masonic scholar George Oliver’s citation of a summary of ancient mysteries wherein the aspirant was required to

*lay himself down upon the bed, which shadowed out the tomb or coffin of the Great Father. This process was equivalent to his entering into the infernal ship; and while stretched upon the holy couch, in imitation of his figurative deceased prototype, he was said to be wrapped in the deep sleep of death. His resurrection from the bed was his restoration to life, or his regeneration into a new world; and it was virtually the same as his return from Hades, or his emerging from the gloomy cavern, or his liberation from the womb of the ship-goddess.*¹³⁸

After citing a portion of this passage, the book comments as follows:

This could correspond to the scene Smith saw of Abraham on the sacrificial bed in Facsimile 1. The resulting Mormon midrash involved Abraham’s forced immolation on the lion couch by the idolatrous Priests of Pharaoh. Hands raised in the grand hailing sign of a Master Mason, Abraham was raised from that bed and initiated into the higher mysteries.¹³⁹

At first glance, what is most striking about this attempted parallel is the paucity of corresponding elements in the two accounts. Unlike Oliver’s initiate, the lion couch does not represent a tomb or coffin, there are no clues that Abraham is “wrapped in the deep sleep of death,” and his raising from the “bedstead” (Abraham 1:13) is portrayed in the Book of Abraham as a rescue from actual physical harm (Abraham 1:15) rather than as figurative episode in a ritual drama. Moreover, there are no clues in the Prophet’s explanation of the facsimile that hint at anything in a scene such as that described by Oliver. Instead, the explanation hews quite closely to what is shown in the papyrus itself.

Going further, there is a long-sustained tradition of Abraham’s near-sacrifice at the hands of his idolatrous kinsmen reaching back at least to the second or third century BCE.¹⁴⁰ There’s no need to posit Masonic parallels. Second, neither the Book of Abraham nor Facsimile 1 say anything about “Abraham’s forced immolation on the lion couch.” Neither does the text or the facsimile describe immolation or the use

of fire in the attempted sacrifice of Abraham. Third, in contrast to the conclusion in the book that the papyrus represents the grand hailing sign of a Master Mason, it seems more reasonable to suppose that the raised hand represents a well-known ancient gesture of prayer and supplication in the Bible and the ancient Near East with which Joseph Smith was no doubt already familiar from prayer traditions in his own day.¹⁴¹

Facsimile 2

In the book's discussion of facsimile 2, an effort is again made to tie the Book of Abraham to George Oliver: "Just as George Oliver did in his Masonic writings, Smith pictured Abraham as the recipient of heavenly instruction concerning astronomy and mathematics."¹⁴² But Oliver in turn lists Josephus as an informant for Abraham's teaching of astronomy to the Egyptians,¹⁴³ and ideas from the writings of Josephus may have been more widely known than Oliver's in Joseph Smith's day.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, the authors commendably admit that "the writings of Josephus were available to the Latter-day Saints in 1835."¹⁴⁵

Going further, the book incorrectly states that "in Reuben Hedlock's facsimile of the hypocephalus, a stylized figure of God on His throne appears to be giving a Masonic sign. His right arm is 'raised to the square,' surmounted by a pair of compasses; His other arm is extended at His side."¹⁴⁶ However, Latter-day Saint Egyptologist D. Michael Rhodes more correctly identifies this figure, consistent with the latest scholarship on the subject,¹⁴⁷ as follows: "A seated, [probably¹⁴⁸] ithyphallic god with a hawk's tail, holding aloft a flail. This is a form of Min, the god of the regenerative, procreative forces of nature, perhaps combined with Horus, as the hawk's tail would seem to indicate."¹⁴⁹ Rhodes continues:

Joseph Smith said this figure represented God sitting upon his throne revealing the grand key-words of the priesthood. Joseph also explained there was a representation of the sign of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove. The Egyptians commonly portrayed the soul or spirit as a bird, so a bird is an appropriate symbol for the Holy Ghost.¹⁵⁰

Facsimile 3

The authors assert, "Egyptologists have agreed that the image on Facsimile 3 represents the judgment of the dead before the throne of Osiris."¹⁵¹ The authors find this important because of an Egyptian judgment scene that is integral to the thirty-first degree of Scottish Rite Masonry¹⁵² — though it should be noted that it's unlikely that Joseph Smith would have known

much if anything about this degree.¹⁵³ Importantly, however, Quinten Barney has reviewed extensively how *at a minimum* it's a presentation scene but may or may not be a judgment scene, since it is missing many elements needed for such an event.¹⁵⁴

The authors again point out that the depiction of Abraham as delivering astronomy to the Egyptians “parallels Masonic tradition.”¹⁵⁵ However, because the two pillars mentioned by Oliver Cowdery are mentioned in connection with Enoch, they are no doubt correct in concluding that the details attributed to Josephus in Cowdery's account came “through Freemasonry.”¹⁵⁶

It should be observed that in a list of terms known in Freemasonry that were included in the explanation of the facsimiles (though most were not part of the Book of Abraham itself), the book incorrectly includes “square and compasses” and “penalties.”¹⁵⁷

The Kirtland Egyptian Papers

Much more might be said about the book's discussion of the admittedly complex and difficult subject of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers than can be included in the present review. One of the major concerns with the section is that it takes several disputed points as matters of fact, including, but not limited to, an assertion concerning Joseph Smith's supposed involvement with all aspects of the creation of these documents.¹⁵⁸

Besides these major concerns, there are smaller but sometimes very consequential mistakes that reduce the trustworthiness of the analysis. For example, on p. 164 the authors say they are citing Joseph Smith's “diary” from July 14, 1835, but then cite a portion of Joseph Smith's manuscript history that was actually composed at least eight years after the dated entry.¹⁵⁹

Chapters 8, 14: Temples

Kirtland Period

The introduction to chapter 8 begins by citing Nehemiah 4:17, where the Jews returning from exile worked with one hand holding a weapon. The book mentions that “Freemasons visually depict this scene with an emblem of the temple masons holding the implements of Masonry: a trowel and mortar in one hand, and a sword in the other for defense.”¹⁶⁰ Wanting to connect this theme to the Book of Mormon, the book states that Nephi's temple workmen built their temple “with tools of masonry in one hand and swords in another.”¹⁶¹ While it is true that 2 Nephi 5:14

does mention the sword of Laban in a general way, the allusive suggestion that the Book of Mormon account makes either literal or figurative mention to the “tools of masonry” has no basis in the scripture text. The passage is emblematic of much of the rest of the chapter: while biblical parallels to temples in the Kirtland and Missouri period are numerous, evidence of specific Masonic influence is frequently lacking.

The examples below are selective, not comprehensive.

Overall Kirtland Temple design and supervision

The book acknowledges that the Kirtland Temple was built according to instructions given to Joseph Smith and two others. Straining for similarities, it points out that in the symbolism of the legends of Freemasonry, “King Solomon’s Temple was built under the direction of three principals: Solomon, King of Israel; Hiram, King of Tyre; and Hiram Abiff, skillful artificer.”¹⁶² But that is as far as Freemasonry can take us. Though Joseph Smith’s role as head of the Church could be compared in a very loose sense to Solomon, there is little parallel in the roles or activities of his counselors to the two Hiram of Freemasonry. More importantly, in contrast to any hint from Masonic lore of a similar idea, the Kirtland Temple followed the governing precedent in the Bible and elsewhere in the ancient Near East that the design of temples is to come through revelation.¹⁶³ Indeed, the Kirtland Temple was shown simultaneously to Joseph Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency in fulfillment of latter-day prophecy — “after the manner which I shall show three of you” (D&C 95:14) — in an open vision.¹⁶⁴

With reference to the “Kirtland Temple’s counterpart in Missouri,” Matthew B. Brown notes the architectural description of those who witnessed the vision above. This description included:

an arched ceiling, Gothic doors and windows with Venetian blinds, a belfry, slip pews, choir seats, a fanlight, painted shingles, tiered pulpit stands or coves for the high (west) and lesser (east) priesthoods, curtains to divide the main chamber into four sections, and also veils to divide the pulpit stands into private areas.¹⁶⁵ None of these features are considered to be a Masonic invention or a distinctive architectural style of speculative Masonry. A check of some of the popular architectural manuals of the day reveals that those manuals

were the source of the decorative motifs associated with the Kirtland Temple — not the Freemasons.¹⁶⁶

Kirtland Temple cornerstone laying

The book correctly points out that the first cornerstone of the Kirtland temple was laid at the southeast corner. It goes on to quote Masonic scholar Albert Mackey's statement that the laying of the cornerstone in the east represents the dawn of a new day, "dissipating the clouds of intellectual darkness and error."¹⁶⁷ However, there is nothing exclusive to Freemasonry in the symbolism of the eastern sunrise — indeed, Mackey himself connects it to traditions of the ancient world. Moreover, while early eighteenth-century Masonic manuscripts locate the cornerstone of "Solomon's Temple" in the southeast corner (consistent with the location of the cornerstone in the 1793 United States Capitol building¹⁶⁸), sometime "in the period 1772–1829"¹⁶⁹ Masonic tradition began to standardize the practice of laying the first stone at the northeast corner,¹⁷⁰ a practice that continues to this day. While the authors state that the laying of the first stone of the Kirtland Temple "was an overt Masonic reference that followed the example set by Washington and his Masonic companions,"¹⁷¹ it should have also been noted that by the time the Kirtland Temple was constructed, laying the foundation at the southeast corner was no longer the most common practice in the rituals of Freemasonry.

Other "marked dissimilarities" between Latter-day Saint and Masonic cornerstone ceremonies are noted by Matthew B. Brown. In contrast to Latter-day Saints, Masons:

- Dedicate one stone rather than four stones
- Use corn, wine, and oil during their rite
- Use an architectural tool to "try the trueness of the cornerstone"
- Can carry out their ceremony with "only a handful of people participating" vs. "a large, set number of priesthood holders"¹⁷²

Kirtland Temple pulpits

Elder Orson Pratt stated that the pattern for the Kirtland Temple priesthood pulpits, like others of the most important or unusual features of the building, were specifically revealed by God,¹⁷³ serving both practical and pedagogical functions by their prominent grouping of quorum presidencies in hierarchical ascent.

In the book we are told that “this arrangement is related to the Royal Arch,”¹⁷⁴ a rite of Freemasonry, yet there is nothing that closely links the formation or function of the pulpit to the gestures and “vaulted chamber containing nine arches”¹⁷⁵ related to this rite except the number nine. We are also informed that the formation “emphasizes the sacred character of the number three, which suggests the presence of divine power”¹⁷⁶ — plausibly true, but this is a common Christian conception, not something specific to Freemasonry. It is noted that the abbreviations for priesthood offices on each pulpit, which use “the first letter for each word,” each word followed by a period, is “widely employed throughout”¹⁷⁷ Masonry. But, regrettably, the book does not inform the reader that “the concept of ... formation” of such initialisms was “effortlessly understood (and evidently not novel)”¹⁷⁸ to general readers of the 1830s.¹⁷⁹

Matthew B. Brown lists additional divergences between the use of the pulpits and Masonic concepts and practices:

While it is true, in a general sense, that officiators in the Kirtland Temple and Masonic lodges were seated in the east and the west, there were significant differences between the two arrangements. For instance, there were twenty-four Mormons but only seven Masons. In the temple, there were twelve people stationed in both the east and the west while the Masons placed four in the east, two in the west, and one in the south. The Mormon individuals were priesthood holders of the Melchizedek and Aaronic orders while the Masons were supervisors and administrators. The highest Mormon authority sat on the west side of the Kirtland Temple while the highest Masonic authority always sat in the east. The Mormon pulpits rose in four tiers on both the east and the west ends of the room while the Masons raised the highest eastern officiator (only) on three steps, the highest western officiator (only) on two steps, and the sole southern officiator on two steps. The only corresponding office between the two sets of dignitaries was that of deacon. In the Kirtland Temple, the three-man presidency over the deacons quorum sat together on the east side while in the lodge, the Senior Deacon sat in the east, but the Junior Deacon sat in the west. The Masons had a Senior and Junior Warden, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and a Worshipful Master sitting in their assigned places. The Mormons had no such officers sitting in their pulpits. The bottom tiers of the Mormon pulpits, on both sides, were equipped with

sacrament tables. The sacrament was not served during the procedures of the lodge. Cloth partitions were utilized in the various compartments of the Mormon pulpits to facilitate privacy in prayer. No partitions of this sort were used [for privacy in Masonic prayer]. . . . Lastly, it should be noted that the twenty-four seats for priesthood holders in the Kirtland Temple mirror the twenty-four seats in the heavenly temple where kings and priests are seated (Revelation 4:4; 5:8–10).¹⁸⁰

Kirtland ritual greetings, washings, and anointings

Descriptions of some practices from the Kirtland School of the Prophets seem loosely reminiscent of the kinds of ritual language patterns one finds in Masonry.¹⁸¹ However, no specific parallels to language in Masonic rites are mentioned in the book.¹⁸²

That said, the book does mention the practice of prayer with uplifted hands. In response, it should be observed that this practice is also frequently mentioned in ancient sources.¹⁸³ Indeed, some texts specifically assert that its exercise goes back to the very beginning. For example, in one Christian text we read that “Adam was then offering on the altar, and had begun to pray, with his hands spread unto God.”¹⁸⁴ Even today, this gesture is widely recognized as a sign of distress, a call for help, and a demonstration of peaceful intent.¹⁸⁵ Not surprisingly, Christians have also long connected the tradition with the posture of crucifixion.¹⁸⁶

The washing of feet, modeled on the Gospel of John, was practiced in Kirtland. The book claims a parallel in “the Masonic Order of High Priesthood” that mentions Abraham’s partaking of bread and wine but, significantly, does not say anything about the washing of feet.¹⁸⁷ It seems reasonable to that Joseph Smith first learned about both well-known events from the Bible itself rather than in a biblical passage cited in the middle of Thomas Smith Webb’s *Freemason’s Monitor*.

Similarly, Joseph Smith was certainly well-aware of initiatory washings and anointings through the events he encountered verse-by-verse as he translated the Old and New Testaments. “Nonetheless,” the book tells us, “these types of ceremonies had been adopted decades before in Freemasonry and exposed in Webb’s *Monitor* and Bernard’s *Light on Masonry*.”¹⁸⁸ While it is true that these exposés mention rites of washing and anointing performed in one or two relatively obscure degrees outside of Craft masonry — rites that Joseph Smith is less likely to have known than the scriptures themselves — it should be noted that, in each case,

the text of these rites explicitly mentions or alludes to related biblical traditions.

Thus, the claim that Joseph Smith “acted as a ‘keen Mason,’” following a procedure that was “similar” to the “development of new degrees in Masonry”¹⁸⁹ supports an unlikely and unnecessary hypothesis. Why should readers find this difficult argument compelling in view of the more straightforward conclusion that in the inspired restoration of these ordinances the Prophet was able to draw directly on what seem to be closer precedents of washing and anointing in Israelite temples and Jesus’s ministry?

Hosanna shout

Attempting to relate the “hosanna shout” to Masonic sources, the book mentions the ritual of the Heroines of Jericho, “a concordant Masonic body associated with the Royal Arch,”¹⁹⁰ which is still practiced today by some Black Americans as part of Prince Hall Masonry. The authors cite an 1884 description of a ritual based on the biblical stories of Ruth and Rahab in which women form three successive circles and give various praises to God. This ritual is mentioned in support of the idea that “the clapping of hands and waving of handkerchiefs” described is “very similar” to the “hosanna shout” that first took place in the Kirtland temple.¹⁹¹ However, the authors provide no evidence that “the clapping of hands and waving of handkerchiefs” described in the 1884 publication were part of an early nineteenth-century version of the Heroines of Jericho rites that the Nauvoo Saints could have known. A more plausible parallel for the context and actions of the Latter-day Saint hosanna shout is the John 12:13 account of the waving of palm branches and shouting “hosanna” during the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Joseph Smith would have also encountered these same themes of praise, pleading for deliverance, and the waving of branches in the Lord’s instructions for celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles¹⁹² and in extended liturgies for such festal pageantry that are found in the Psalms.¹⁹³

Passing of the temple veils in Kirtland

In the book, a comparison is made between the vision of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery of Moses, Elias, and Elijah in the Kirtland Temple and the Masonic Royal Arch Rite of Exaltation wherein candidates cite biblical verses at four different veils before being crowned in the presence of a Masonic king, high priest, and scribe-prophet.¹⁹⁴ However, the parallel is very loose, since there is no hint in D&C 110 that Joseph and

Oliver performed any tests of knowledge, passed through a series of veils, entered “the presence of a Divine council consisting of a prophet, priest, and king,” or were crowned at that time. Instead, we are told that these three Old Testament figures, along with Jesus Christ Himself, restored specific keys of knowledge and priesthood that would be necessary for them to continue the work of gathering scattered Israel and performing temple ordinances.

Nauvoo Period

Sacred garments

Although Masonic rites do not provide initiates with a sacred garment in likeness of Adam and Eve’s “coats of skins” that are worn every day throughout one’s life, the book rightly points out some commonalities: namely, that the Masonic apron is worn at ceremonial occasions and is buried with Freemasons in death.¹⁹⁵ Perhaps of greatest significance is that both the Masonic fraternity and the temple ordinances use the ancient tools of the compass and the square to teach essential lessons about progress toward heavenly virtues in the life of the maturing initiate.¹⁹⁶ In Masonry, these two key symbols of the Lodge are pressed directly upon the bodies of candidates to underscore lessons of honesty, self-control, and respecting the confidentiality of Lodge secrets.¹⁹⁷

However, it should be noted that, in contrast to Masonic practice, Latter-day Saint garments bear sacred marks that are tied to specific symbolism of Christ’s flesh on the veil, consistent with allusions in the Bible.¹⁹⁸ Apart from the important related symbolism of the square and compass, the clothing element of the initiatory ordinance is more similar to analogues in the ancient world and the Bible, as I have argued elsewhere.¹⁹⁹

High-priestly clothing

By way of contrast to the additional priesthood-related clothing of the endowment, “in the Masonic system the apron consists almost entirely of [the] ritual dress minus the clothes for the initiate.”²⁰⁰ The clothing put on in the temple endowment is patterned after the clothing of the Israelite high priest described in the Bible and symbolizes the heavenly clothing that is to be given to faithful individuals in the next life.²⁰¹

Ritual ascent

The idea that Masonic rites describe an ascent to the heavenly temple is briefly discussed in the book.²⁰² Although Freemasonry is not a religion²⁰³ and, in contrast to Latter-day Saint temple ordinances, does not claim saving power for its rites, threads relating to biblical themes of exaltation are evident in some Masonic rituals. For example, in the ceremonies of the Royal Arch degree of the York rite, candidates pass through a series of veils and eventually enter into the divine presence.²⁰⁴ In addition, Christian interpretations of Masonry, like Salem Town's description of the "eighth degree," tell of how the righteous will "be admitted within the veil of God's presence, where they will become kings and priests before the throne of his glory for ever and ever."²⁰⁵ Such language echoes New Testament teachings²⁰⁶ and also, broadly, rites of initiation and kingship in Egypt and the ancient Near East.²⁰⁷ Thus, apart from specific ritual language patterns and symbols, a more general form of resemblance between Latter-day Saint temple ritual, some Masonic degrees, the Bible, and other ancient sources can be seen in their shared views about the ultimate potential of humankind.²⁰⁸

However, by way of contrast to the general sequence of the Latter-day Saint temple endowment that draws on the scriptural story of Adam and Eve and its analogue in older rites described in the Bible and other ancient sources, Masonic scholar Walter Wilmshurst (among other predecessors²⁰⁹ and successors²¹⁰) suggested that the three rites of the Craft Lodge (Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason) find their closest parallel in three initiatory rites of the early Christian Church (Catechumen, Leiturgoi, and Priests/Presbyters).²¹¹ Note also that the important Masonic symbols of ascent in the first two degrees — "Jacob's Theological Ladder in the First Degree, the Winding Stair which one ascends to obtain a reward in the Second Degree"²¹² — are not mentioned in the temple endowment.

Going further, the book mentions "the 'raising' of the candidate in mystical embrace in the Third degree."²¹³ However, in its discussion, the book fails to mention the embraces of Jacob with the angel and his brother Esau in the story of Jacob.²¹⁴ Imagery showing these embraces of Jacob that specifically recall the "five points of fellowship" is currently traceable as far back as the twelfth century, centuries before the formal organization of speculative Freemasonry.²¹⁵ In addition, such medieval depictions took inspiration from the earlier Old Testament stories of Elijah and Elisha each raising a child back to life.²¹⁶ Indeed, the stories of Elijah and Elisha are specifically referenced in what is perhaps the

earliest reference to the “five points of fellowship” in Masonry — the 1696 Edinburgh Register House Manuscript.²¹⁷

During this five-point embrace — which, incidentally, is not connected with a veil and does not figure as part of the rites of exaltation in the Masonic Royal Arch degree — two Masons exchange a “tri-syllabic code word,”²¹⁸ a substitute for the original “Mason’s word,” which was lost.²¹⁹ They were also told (in Morgan’s version of the 1826 rite) that this substitute word signified “marrow in the bone,”²²⁰ a term of ancient significance.²²¹ The book informs us that within Master Mason rite, “the brief ritual embrace instructed the Mason in fraternal duties, emphasizing the need for brotherly love, co-operation, and unity; it provided a mode of recognition; and, significantly, it stood as a symbol of the Mason’s hope of a resurrection.”²²²

For many years, the Latter-day Saint endowment also included “five points of fellowship”²²³ and the similarity in particular gestures and nomenclature leaves no doubt that these were adopted and adapted from Freemasonry by Joseph Smith. However, like other symbolic gestures in the endowment that will be discussed in part three of this review, its primary purpose was not as a token of brotherly love or as a mode of recognition among mortals,²²⁴ but rather — consistent with the rest of the endowment — had a distinct symbolism specifically related to the life and mission of Jesus Christ. Unlike Freemasonry but similar to temple practices in the ancient world, such embraces are associated with a ritual passage through the veil into the presence of God.²²⁵ (See Figure 3.)

Quorum of the Anointed

The book includes a brief discussion of the Quorum of the Anointed.²²⁶ In this connection, the most direct and specific connection with Freemasonry mentioned is in a testimony given as part of the “Temple Lot” legal proceedings. These proceedings took place in the 1890s, five decades after the Saints left Nauvoo.

The book quotes the testimony from a secondhand source²²⁷ and mistakenly attributes the statement to Lucy Meserve Smith rather than to Bathsheba W. Smith.²²⁸ In addition, it conflates Bathsheba’s responses with the questions introduced by her interrogator, Mr. Hall.²²⁹ Examination of the original transcript shows that it is Mr. Hall, not Bathsheba, who “intermingled the Mormon ceremony with contemporary women’s Freemasonry.”²³⁰ When Mr. Hall is the first to introduce the subject, Bathsheba states that the *Order of Rebecca* was “not anything like” the

temple ceremony.²³¹ In fact, Bathsheba never mentions the “side degree of Masonry” called the *Order of Rebecca* herself, and when her interrogator persists, she is tentative about whether she was ever initiated into such a degree and cannot tell when it was given to her (“I don’t know”) or what it was called (“I can’t remember to save my life what degree it was”). Finally, in exasperation after Mr. Hall’s continued pestering of the evidently forgetful and struggling elderly woman, Bathsheba’s counsel objects on the grounds that “it is incompetent, irrelevant, and immaterial, and not proper cross examination.”²³² Elsewhere, David H. Dodd and I have published a study showing how introducing leading questions of this sort is liable to lead witnesses to construct false memories of situations that may never have occurred in the first place.²³³

Nauvoo Temple architecture and furnishings

The book makes expansive claims about resemblances of architecture, layouts, and furnishings in Masonic lodges and the Nauvoo Temple.²³⁴ Elsewhere I have made a detailed comparison of the Nauvoo Temple and Masonic Lodges, and came to the following conclusions:

- In overall conception, Masonic lodges and Latter-day Saint temples both strive to emulate ideas from ancient temples. In their broad design, Latter-day Saint temples are arguably closer to their biblical counterparts.
- While the Nauvoo Temple uses a small handful of individual elements important in Masonry, its external building features were inspired by direct revelation and draw more directly on New Testament symbolism.
- Apart from the presence of a series 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.²³⁵

3. What’s Missing

In this section, I’ll discuss some of “what’s missing” in the book, with a focus on the relationship between Freemasonry and the temple ordinances. In my view, the influences of Freemasonry on the temple ordinances can be placed in their proper context only when their relative

strengths are also compared to other potential sources of inspiration — for example, revelations stemming from Joseph Smith’s study of the Bible. Giving due consideration to these sources of inspiration that are “missing” in the book will help us better untangle the nature and extent of Freemasonry’s influence on the Nauvoo Temple ordinances.

The omission of these sources in *Method Infinite* is not accidental. The book explicitly argues against the belief that ritual similarities between temple ordinances and Masonic rituals can be explained through “common ancient sources,” holding that such a view is

untenable for several reasons, the foremost being that the further one goes back in time, the more dissimilar Mormon and Masonic rituals become. Moreover, the Masonic ritual source (i.e., the Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason degrees, including the Royal Arch) cannot be reliably traced beyond the early eighteenth century.²³⁶

I am sympathetic to the view expressed in the book given that some Latter-day Saints have taken extreme positions, mistakenly arguing that there is *no* real relationship between Freemasonry and the restoration of temple ordinances. However, while agreeing that the extreme position is mistaken, I would like to make two observations about the statement from the book cited above:

- First, the book argues that ritual similarities between temple ordinances and Masonic rituals cannot be explained through “common ancient sources” because “the further one goes back in time, the more dissimilar Mormon and Masonic rituals become.”²³⁷ This is certainly true in some instances — as, for example, in the Nauvoo Temple version of the “five points of fellowship,” which is closer to Morgan’s 1826 version than to earlier versions by Preston and Webb.²³⁸ However, more commonly, when elements of Masonic rites and temple ordinances intersect it is not due to specific similarities in Masonic rituals that have varied over time. Rather, it is usually because the rites of Masonry and temple ordinances share broader “family resemblances” to many themes and practices that stretch back to the Bible and temple-related rituals in antiquity — for example, washing, anointing, clothing, and requirements for secrecy. In these instances, it is not unreasonable for believing Latter-day Saints to posit

that “common ancient sources” may have informed the development of both temple ordinances and Masonic rites.

- Second, though the book correctly states that “the Masonic ritual source ... cannot reliably be traced beyond the early eighteenth century,”²³⁹ this should not be taken to mean that Freemasonry lacked important antecedents. For example, Masonic scholar Walter Wilmshurst (among others²⁴⁰) has suggested that the three rites of the Craft Lodge predate the early eighteenth century, noting a source of parallels in three initiatory rites of the early Christian Church.²⁴¹ It is also commonly held by Masonic scholars, each in their own fashion, that many elements of the rites and symbols of Freemasonry can be traced back even further in time. As one simple example, Masonic rites contain many explicit citations and implicit allusions to the Bible.

Perspective and Basic Approach

Method Infinite is essentially two things: 1. a history of events directly relating to Freemasonry and the Latter-day Saints; and 2. an exploration of how Freemasonry may have influenced other events, people, ideas, scriptures, practices, and ordinances of the Church. In the earlier sections of this review, I’ve tried to complement the book’s exploration by considering additional data and arguments. For many topics, I thought the book’s discussions of *similarities* to Freemasonry needed to be counterbalanced with descriptions of *differences* and *missing or underplayed* sources of inspiration that were also at work throughout early Church history.

Given the degree of interest in the relationship between Masonic rites and the temple ordinances for the Latter-day Saints, this section will draw on the tenets of scholarship on comparative analysis to examine this important relationship from additional, varying angles.²⁴² Though this short and somewhat superficial sampling of comparative methods will be limited here to temple ordinances and goes somewhat beyond what would typically be found in a typical book review, I hope that readers will get a glimpse of how analogous approaches could be adapted as models for deeper explorations of many of the purported parallels between Freemasonry and Latter-day Saint history and thought that have been suggested in *Method Infinite*.

More generally, in my view, the readers’ indulgence in this digression will serve the interest of suggesting how initial ideas such as these can

improve the kinds of comparisons that are frequently made in studies of Latter-day Saint history, theology, and scripture — thus, avoiding pitfalls and recognizing best practices.

Due to the need for brevity, arguments underpinning the conclusions presented here will be rapidly sketched rather than fully drawn. Readers who are interested in examining the underlying data for themselves in order to reach their own conclusions may wish to consult a longer study published elsewhere.²⁴³ For the sake of this review, I will frame the discussion using five simple questions:

1. How much do the text of the Masonic rites and the temple ordinances overlap?
2. What common and unique sources could have contributed to Masonic rites and temple ordinances?
3. What elements of the temple ordinances can be best attributed to Masonic influence?
4. How many of the thematic elements of the temple ordinances are spanned by the resemblances to potential catalysts?
5. What is the relative strength of the resemblances for each of these potential catalysts?

How much do the text of the Masonic rites and the temple ordinances overlap?

Perhaps the most basic tenet of the comparative method is that the examination should include a discussion of both similarities and differences. A close runner-up in importance is the tenet that relative similarity between two or more texts cannot be assessed by simply totaling the number of resemblances. Rather, the *density* of these resemblances must also be considered.²⁴⁴ “Shotgun” approaches, where the text of primary interest is analyzed in relation to a much larger comparative text, almost inevitably pick up similarities in wording scattered sparsely throughout the longer text.

Although I have not performed word counts to determine the relative sizes of the texts of Masonic rites and temple ordinances, nor have I done a statistical analysis to determine how much vocabulary and phrasing they have in common, I expect that most knowledgeable readers would agree that the diagram shown in Figure 1 provides a reasonably satisfactory notional view about their degree of commonality.

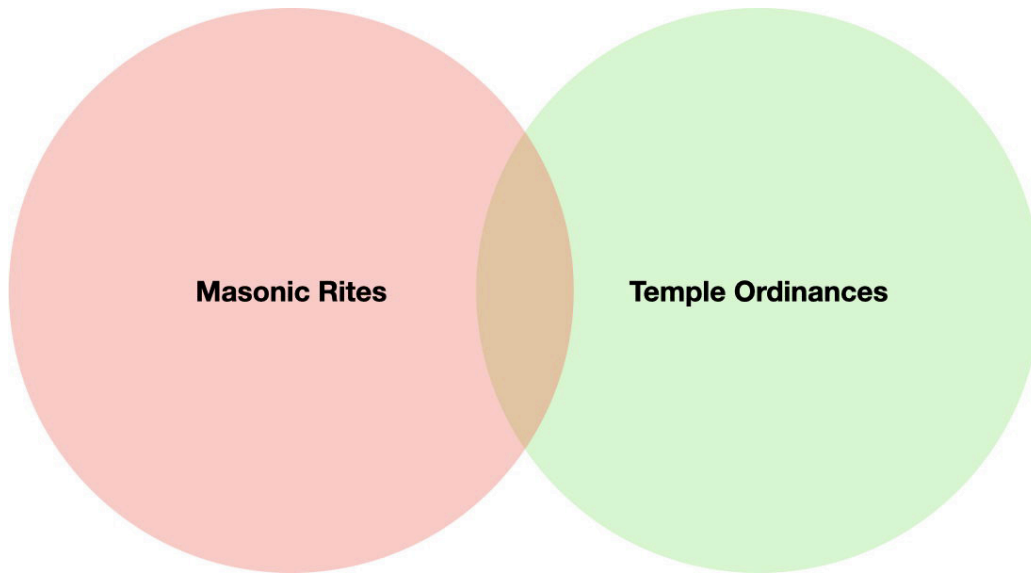


Figure 1. Notional overlap between the texts of Masonic rites and temple ordinances.

That said, every thoughtful reader will differ in the details — preferring either to nudge the overlapping circles somewhat closer together or separating them more widely. For instance, Latter-day Saint scholar Eugene Seach saw the two circles as having less overlap than I do. In my opinion, he certainly understated the extent of similarity — even if repeated ritual dialogue forms are only counted once — when he wrote:

It is particularly noteworthy that of all the extensive Masonic ritual, which occupies more than two-hundred double-columned pages in *Richardson's Monitor of Freemasonry*, the Prophet accepted as genuine only that which might fill a single page in the same format, *even correcting it in major points*.²⁴⁵

On the other hand, as I've showed earlier in this review, *Method Infinite* often overstates the extent of similarities between Freemasonry and Latter-day Saint thought on many topics, not just those having to do with the temple. Of course, some of what I consider to be exaggerated emphasis is implicit and probably unconscious, due to lack of discussion factors that were apparently seen to be of lesser relevance to the focus of the book.

In any case, I think it is safe to say that no reasonable individual who is familiar with both Masonic ritual and the temple ordinances would claim either that the two circles are entirely disjoint nor that they overlap almost completely. In my view, the situation can be roughly characterized as follows:

- On the one hand, most of the narrative and ritual content of temple ordinances (mostly based on the Creation, the Fall, and the giving of ordinances to Adam and Eve) has no counterpart in Masonic ritual.
- On the other hand, most of the narrative and ritual content of the Masonic rites (mostly based on legendary and biblical events having to do with the building of temples in Jerusalem) has no counterpart in the temple ordinances.
- In most respects, Masonic rites and temple ordinances are more like distant cousins than immediate family members.

It should not be surprising that there are more differences than similarities in Masonic rites and the temple ordinances. As George L. Mitton has observed:²⁴⁶ “Manifestly, a prophet’s mission could include a determination of what is sound in the environment and what is not.” From his encounter with Freemasonry, Joseph Smith adopted and adapted a relatively small set of elements he deemed useful as he restored ancient temple ordinances, while rejecting the greater part of what is contained in Masonic rites as irrelevant.²⁴⁷

What common and unique sources could have contributed to Masonic rites and temple ordinances?

As a memorable way to characterize the diverse origins of various elements of the temple ordinances, Joe Steve Swick III, a scholar of Masonry and an endowed member of the Church, played on the rhyme describing a Victorian gift-giving custom. According to custom, for good luck, brides were given “Something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue.”²⁴⁸

Varying the traditional wording, he suggested that modern temple ordinances are “Something old, something new, something borrowed, *but it’s all true.*”²⁴⁹ Teachings, symbols, and ritual restored from antiquity through revelation (the “old”), freshly revealed to meet the needs of modern Saints (the “new”),²⁵⁰ and adapted from the Bible, Masonry, and other sources known to Joseph Smith that served as catalysts for additional, elaborating and confirming revelation (the “borrowed”) can all come together in the House of the Lord under prophetic guidance and authority.

While Figure 1 provides a notional view of the extent of similarities and differences between Masonic rites and temple ordinances, Figure 2 attempts to give a feel for the universe of possible catalysts for temple-related revelations and teachings.

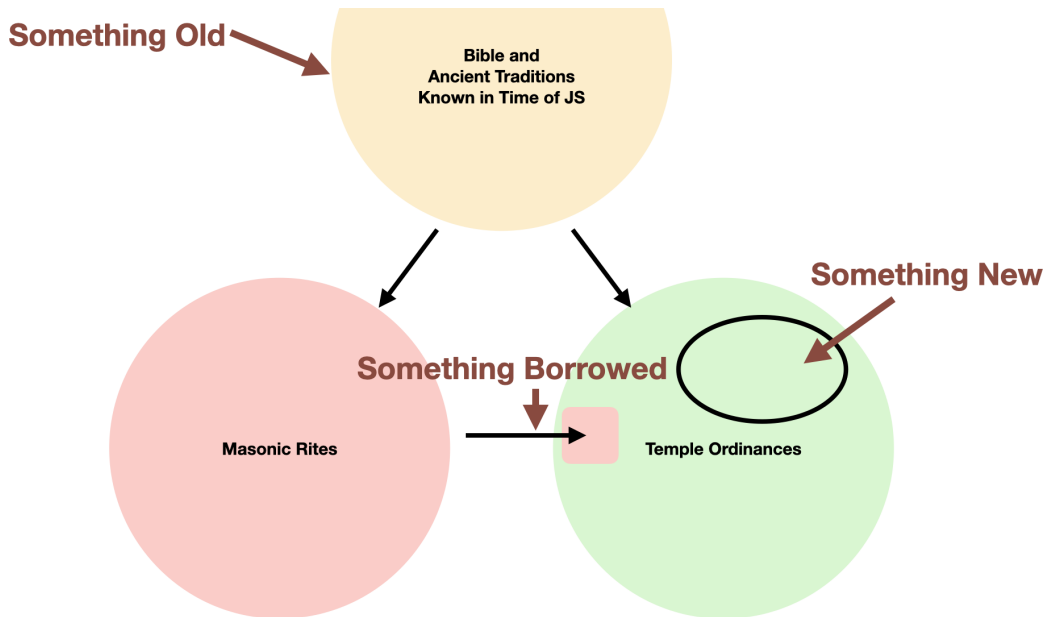


Figure 2. The Bible and ancient traditions known in the time of Joseph Smith (something old) are influences common to both Masonic rites and temple ordinances. The Prophet’s own revelations added “something new.” And selected elements of Masonic rites were “borrowed” and adapted for temple ordinances. The sizes of the colored areas are arbitrary — what is important is the universe of possible relationships implied by the arrows, not its size or strength.

Something old

Another important tenet of comparative research is to discover what common factors known to authors of the texts being compared may account for some of the similarities among them.

In this case, both ancient and modern Masonic historians agree with the general observation that despite Freemasonry’s relatively late origins, some things in its rites draw on the Bible and other ancient traditions.²⁵¹ Joseph Smith and subsequent prophets have said the same about temple ordinances.²⁵² Notably, the Prophet’s focus on Bible translation from 1830–1833 would have given him deep exposure to many temple- and priesthood-related ideas in the Old and New Testaments,²⁵³ including many things that are not found to any significant extent in Masonic rites. Though the Prophet occasionally mentions selected Masonic themes overtly beginning in 1842²⁵⁴ — three years after his arrival in Nauvoo — quotations and allusions drawn directly from scripture overwhelmingly predominate in the sermons the Prophet gives in explanation of his beliefs — from the beginning of his ministry to the end of his life.²⁵⁵

Regrettably, however, *Method Infinite* discusses the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible only in terms of the possibility that certain

revisions were influenced by Freemasonry.²⁵⁶ So far as I have been able to discover, it does not discuss the Prophet's intense work on the Bible as a likely direct *source* of inspiration for many aspects of temple ordinances.

Something new

New revelation and new adaptations to the capacities and situation of the people have taken place continually since the temple ordinances were first introduced. Thus, we would expect to find Joseph Smith's restored temple rites deviating at times from the wording and symbolism of ancient ordinances in the interest of clarity and relevance to modern disciples. Richard E. Turley, Jr., former Assistant Church Historian, has wisely suggested that individuals "should look for the differences between the endowment and Masonic rituals if they want to find the essence of what the Lord revealed to Joseph."²⁵⁷

In addition to resemblances to the Bible, Freemasonry, and other sources known in Joseph Smith's time, Latter-day Saint scholars have discovered significant evidence that ancient temple-related traditions and practices *not* available to the Prophet appear in modern temple ordinances and teachings. To the degree these ancient temple ideas and practices cannot be found in Masonry or anywhere else in Joseph Smith's world, believers in his prophetic mission can be reasonably confident that he learned them by revelation — unless and until new evidence comes along showing that they originated in the nineteenth century.²⁵⁸

Something borrowed

As to borrowing, I agree with the position of Richard Turley that some things were originally adopted from Freemasonry²⁵⁹ (and potentially other sources) and then adapted to the context of temple ordinances. As Joseph Smith stated:

The first and fundamental principle of our holy religion is, that we believe that we have a right to embrace all, and every item of truth, without limitation or without being circumscribed by the creeds or superstitious notions of men, ... including whatsoever is manifest unto us by the highest degree of testimony that God has committed us, as written in the Old and New Testament, or anywhere else, by any manifestation, whereof we know that it has come from God.²⁶⁰

To the degree specific terminology, gestures, and phrases are currently known only to be found in nineteenth-century Masonry and

the temple but nowhere else, we can be confident that they originated there — at least unless and until new discoveries prove otherwise.

But it's all true!

As Joseph Smith himself described it, “One of the grand fundamental principles of Mormonism is to receive truth, let it come from where it may. ... If, as a skillful mechanic in taking a welding heat, I use a borax and aluminum, etc. and succeed in welding ... all together, shall I not have attained a good object?”²⁶¹

With this in mind, individuals who accept revelation as a source for the temple ordinances don't need to decide whether Joseph Smith's initial spark of inspiration relating to a given feature of the temple ordinances originated with his exposure to sources available to him or came through direct divine intervention. Instead, they are free to adopt a stance something like the following:

1. To the degree a given element of the temple ordinances can be found in the Bible or extant ancient sources, it suggests that these sources may have been catalysts for temple-related revelations.
2. When a given element of the temple ordinances is closer to Freemasonry than what can be found in the Bible or extant ancient sources, it provides support for Heber C. Kimball's view that Masonry has “now and then a thing that is correct.”²⁶²
3. When a given element of the temple ordinances varies from Freemasonry or is absent altogether from its ritual and teachings, believers can take Richard Turley's view that “the differences between the endowment and Masonic rituals” constitute “the essence of what the Lord revealed to Joseph.”²⁶³
4. To the degree a given element of the temple ordinances agrees in non-trivial ways with relevant ancient sources that Joseph Smith could not have known, the fact becomes difficult to explain as a mere coincidence. Such findings can be taken as potential evidence (though always tentative and fallible) of his prophetic calling. We now possess abundant evidence of this kind.

What elements of the temple ordinances can be best attributed to Masonic influence?

Employing a tenet of the comparative method that BYU Professor Nicholas J. Frederick calls “dissimilarity,”²⁶⁴ it is important to take note of significant instances where Masonic rites and the temple ordinances uniquely share unusual ritual terminology, phrases, or actions that are not specifically found in sources Joseph Smith could have known. In my current assessment of the data, there are three classes of elements within the temple ordinances where this seems most likely to be the case: ritual gestures, ritual language patterns, and the sacred embrace.²⁶⁵

This finding is of special interest in part because of a late statement by Elder Franklin D. Richards, where he said:

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 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.²⁶⁶

Thus, Joseph Smith’s desire to learn or to confirm his existing knowledge about “some *keys* of knowledge appertaining to Masonry” — in other words some of the ritual gestures, including the sacred embrace — may have been one of the significant reasons for Joseph Smith’s having formed the Nauvoo Lodge in the first place.

The rituals of the Lodge enabled Latter-day Saint Masons to become familiar with symbols and forms they would later encounter in the Nauvoo temple. These included specific ritual terms, language, handclasps, and gestures as well as larger patterns such as those involving repetition and the use of questions and answers as an aid to teaching.

While the specificity of certain resemblances of ritual gestures, terminology, and dialogue patterns in Masonic rites lends support to the idea that these elements were initially adopted from Freemasonry and then modified through revelation for use in temple ordinances, it should be remembered that none of ritual gestures and language patterns are without older precedents in ancient traditions and the Bible.²⁶⁷

Going further, as I have studied elements of temple ordinances that were good candidates for having been adopted and adapted from nineteenth-century sources, I have often found that in those cases where Joseph Smith seems to have borrowed an idea as an initial

catalyst, the final form of the idea in the temple ordinances is sometimes closer in line with ancient precedents. Saying this a different way, things that seem to have originated in borrowings were more often than not nudged in the direction of older forms.

For example, unlike the utilitarian emphasis of gestures of recognition such as “tokens” (grips), “signs,” and “penalties” (penal signs) in Freemasonry,²⁶⁸ Joseph Smith’s temple teachings stressed the other-worldly significance of the words and gestures, performed in elegant simplicity. The allegorical and practical uses of signs and tokens in Freemasonry were subordinated to his understanding that the keys of the priesthood were primarily of religious significance. In this respect his interests were more closely allied with those of the ancient world who saw salvific significance in ritual gestures.

For example, in Hans Memling’s striking fifteenth-century depiction of the gates of Paradise,²⁶⁹ a sacred grip is featured alongside other, more conventional symbols of heavenly ascent after death (see Figure 3). The doors at the top resemble the porch and façade of an imposing gothic cathedral, flanked by musical angels. Other angels prepare the elect for entry



Figure 3. Hans Memling (ca. 1433–1494):
The Gates of Paradise with St. Peter,
1471–1473.

by helping them don priestly vestments. A crown shaped like a mitre is placed on their heads, prefiguring by three centuries later Masonic rites.²⁷⁰ Significantly, as a precursor to the climb of the righteous up the final stairway, Peter himself personally extends his hand to approaching men and women in a sacred handclasp.²⁷¹ The scene recalls an image from the tenth-century *Bamberg Apocalypse*, where John is admitted to the New Jerusalem by a special handclasp.²⁷²

How many of the thematic elements of the temple ordinances are spanned by the resemblances to potential catalysts?

An additional consideration in comparative analysis is to determine what proportion of the two texts contain resemblances: Do they span the entire target text or only limited segments?²⁷³ As Samuel Sandmel observes in his well-known essay on “parallelomania”: “Detailed study is the criterion, and the detailed study ought to respect the context and not be limited to juxtaposing mere excerpts.”²⁷⁴ The results of comparative studies are most convincing when strong evidence of common themes and narrative elements can be found across a *large proportion* of the text of primary interest. In addition, commonalities in *sequence* are important. A high correlation in the sequence of major narrative elements of the text of primary interest and its comparative cohorts is a powerful form of evidence.²⁷⁵

Consistent with these considerations — and in order to broaden the field of comparison beyond the smaller set of resemblances that would be found if the analysis were limited only to exact matches in terminology and phrases — I identified thirty-one themes that were meant to describe various elements found somewhere within the entirety of the temple ordinances, as shown in Table 2. Whenever a meaningful resemblance between the Bible, other ancient sources, and Freemasonry was found to one of these themes, I took note. Though the elements I used to make these judgments are rough and preliminary, I hoped they would be a useful starting point for a natural breakdown of the topic.

I tried to be generous in the comparisons. For example, since the rites of Freemasonry are designed to accommodate people of all faiths (not just Christians), they make no explicit mention of Jesus Christ. However, because many Christian Masons in Joseph Smith’s day saw Jesus as being present in Masonic rites allegorically, I counted it as a thematic resemblance to temple ordinances. I also counted loose thematic resemblances discovered outside of Craft and Royal Arch Masonry that are less likely to have been known to Joseph Smith.

Table 2. Thematic Elements of Temple Ordinances.

		Bible	Ancient Sources	Freemasonry	Joseph Smith
General Comparisons to Latter-day Saint Temple Ordinances					
1.	Central Role of Jesus Christ	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.	Essential for Salvation	✓	✓		✓
3.	Ancient Beginnings	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.	Need for Priesthood Authority	✓	✓		✓
5.	Exaltation for the Righteous	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.	Overall Sequence of the Endowment	✓	✓		✓
7.	Joint Exaltation of Man and Woman	✓	✓		✓
8.	Rituals Performed by Proxy	✓	✓		✓
Comparisons to the Latter-day Saint Initiatory Ordinances					
9.	Washing	✓	✓	✓	✓
10.	Anointing	✓	✓	✓	✓
11.	Clothing	✓	✓	✓	✓
12.	New Name	✓	✓	✓	✓
Comparisons to Ritual Gestures and Language Patterns					
13.	Ritual Gestures	✓	✓	✓	✓
14.	Ritual Language Patterns	✓	✓	✓	✓
Comparisons to the Endowment					
15.	Reversing the Fall of Adam and Eve	✓	✓	✓	✓
16.	Three Messengers	✓	✓	✓	✓
17.	Ladder-like Progression of Covenants	✓	✓		✓
18.	Ladder-Like Progression of Names	✓	✓		✓
19.	Ladder-like Progression of Priesthoods	✓	✓		✓
20.	Ladder-like Changes of Clothing	✓	✓	✓	✓
21.	True Order of Prayer	✓	✓		✓
Comparisons to Traversing the Veil in the Endowment					
22.	Sacred Embrace	✓	✓	✓	✓
23.	Conversations in Most Holy Places	✓	✓	✓	✓
Comparisons to Sealing Power					
24.	Sealing Power	✓	✓		✓
Comparisons to the Fulness of the Priesthood					
25.	Fulness of the Priesthood	✓	✓	✓	✓
26.	More Sure Word of Prophecy	✓	✓		✓

		Bible	Ancient Sources	Freemasonry	Joseph Smith
Comparisons to Nauvoo Temple Architecture, Layout, and Furnishings					
27.	Overall Conception	✓	✓	✓	✓
28.	External Building Features	✓	✓		✓
29.	Layout and Furnishings	✓	✓		✓
Comparisons to the Two Crowning Adornments of the Nauvoo Temple					
30.	Holiness to the Lord	✓	✓	✓	✓
31.	Symbolism of the Angel Weathervane	✓	✓	✓	✓

Afterward, I located each of the thirty-one elements being compared in the appropriate place in the Venn diagram shown in Figure 4. For example, elements of the temple ordinances that showed up in some fashion in all three categories being compared — the Bible, Ancient Sources, *and* Freemasonry — were placed in the diagram in the space labeled “E.” This categorization was intended to provide some qualitative idea of how frequently different combinations of similarities appeared.

What was most interesting at first blush is that only two of these nine possible areas in the diagram, E and F, are populated with data. In brief, this finding tells us that:

- With respect to the area labeled E, taking currently available data into account, the rites of Freemasonry, the Bible, and ancient sources are all seen as being related in some fashion to a greater or lesser degree to eighteen of the thirty-one elements of the temple ordinances examined.
- With respect to the areas E and F taken together, I found that the Bible and ancient sources were both related to all thirty-one elements of temple ordinances examined — all eighteen that were related to Freemasonry plus thirteen more that are not. For this reason, I lumped together the results for the Bible and other ancient sources in the later analysis of relative strength discussed below.

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.

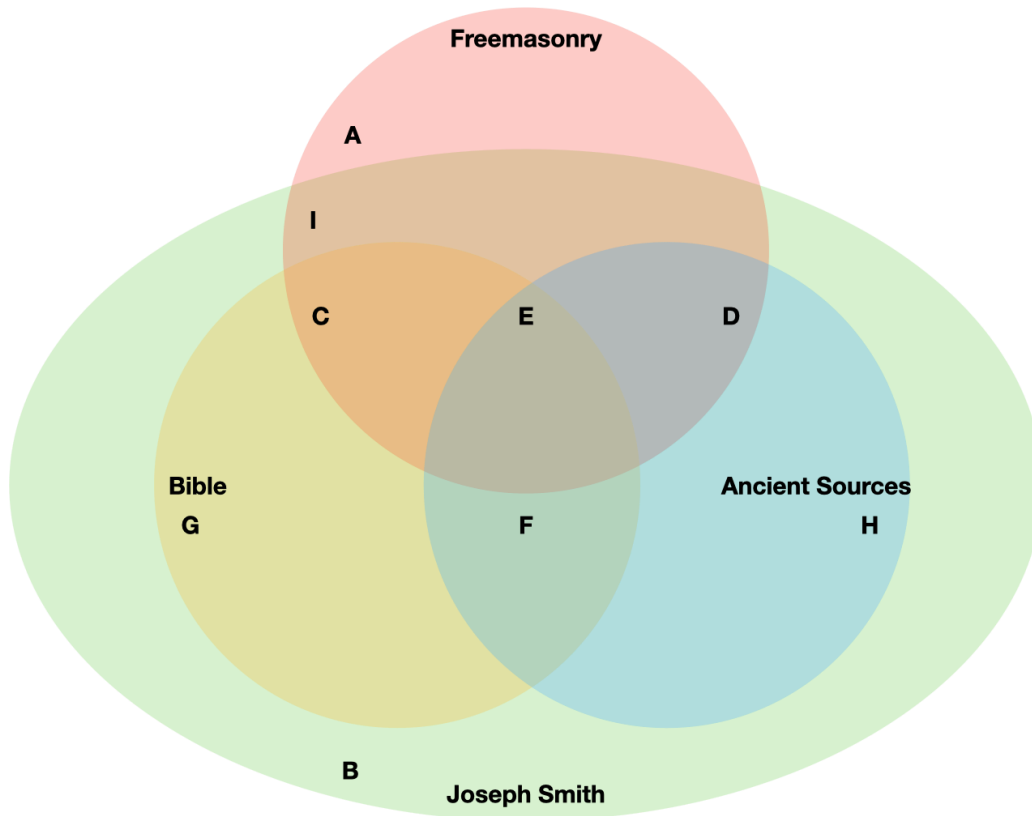


Figure 4. Venn diagram of the universe of possible relationships of rites and concepts from the rites of Freemasonry, the Bible, and ancient sources to temple ordinances revealed through Joseph Smith. The sizes of the circles are arbitrary.

What is the relative strength of the resemblances for each of these potential catalysts?

Whenever the Bible/Ancient Sources and Freemasonry were both related in some fashion to a given element of temple ordinances, it seemed useful to determine which of the two resemblances was stronger in each case. Figure 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.

Saying it another way, with the exception of the three elements discussed earlier — ritual gestures, ritual language patterns, and the sacred embrace — it is my view that all but one of the remaining Nauvoo

Temple ordinances examined were closer to the Bible and other ancient sources than Freemasonry.²⁷⁶

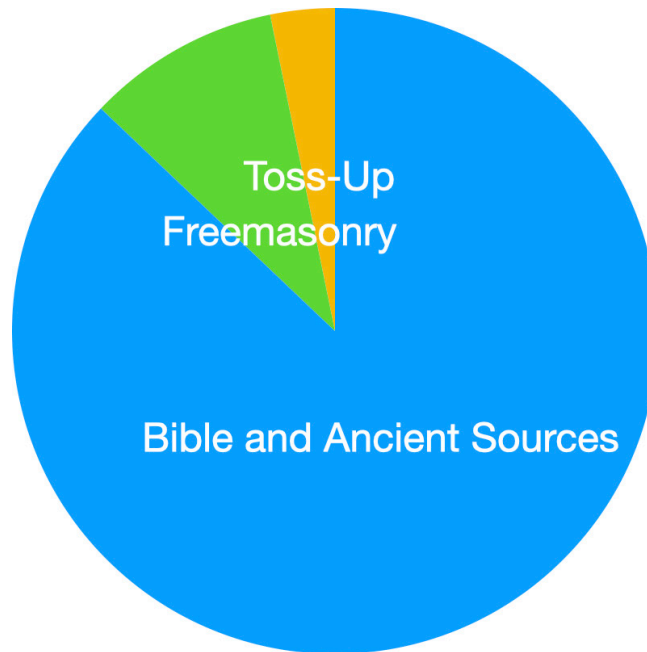


Figure 5. Elements of temple ordinances classified according to their strongest relationships.

By way of contrast to the list of elements themselves, the relative strength of a relationship for a given text in the Bible, ancient sources, or Freemasonry to the temple ordinances admittedly required a more subjective judgment. Specific relationships and judgments about their strength is likely to change as new evidence appears in future studies. In the original study, I tried to provide enough data 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. This does not rule out additional resemblances with Freemasonry beyond the three that were discussed earlier, but it implies that these additional resemblances are secondary — that is, they are likely due to the fact that the Bible and other ancient sources independently influenced both Freemasonry and, subsequently, modern temple ordinances.

Conclusions

Besides the many valuable new insights into underappreciated corners of Latter-day Saint history that *Method Infinite* shares with attentive readers, there is an additional, unintended lesson it exemplifies — namely, that the events and ideas of the early Restoration are multidimensional, complex, and overdetermined. As Latter-day Saint historian Richard L. Bushman has written:

When writing about the place of Mormonism in American culture, one can easily make the mistake of thinking that the key to the subject has been discovered. Entire books have been written about Mormonism and republicanism, Mormonism and the magic worldview, Mormonism and hermeticism — and seeker religion, and millenarianism, and restorationism. In the enthusiasm of writing and reading these works, one comes to believe that the central impulse, the main source, and the chief attraction of Mormonism have been found. Individually each study is persuasive and exciting. Each one opens new vistas. Only when we view them together do we realize that while each study tells us something, no single study tells us everything about the subject. . . . A commitment to one approach inevitably involves the individual in its limitations.²⁷⁷

My hope is that the considerable efforts of the authors to create this pioneering volume on Freemasonry and the Latter-day Saints will prove to be the first in a new flowering of relevant studies that will further illuminate additional dimensions relating to this important and challenging subject. More generally, I am also confident that as future studies embrace the additional rigor of scholarship on comparative research methods, readers will be in a better position to reject simplistic discussions of parallels and to understand and evaluate the roles of the “multitudinous connections” that “can potentially illuminate and enrich” the current subject under study.²⁷⁸

Above all, I am grateful for the example of Bushman in pointing out that in conversations with other scholars generally, as with the productive dialogue I’ve had with the authors of *Method Infinite*, we can realize that in

a truly deep friendship, we don’t have to be the same. We celebrate and love our differences. We should be able to point out our differences with others and then make disagreement

not only acceptable but an act of love. Some cultures show their affection by arguing. We don't. We [incorrectly] choose [either] perfect harmony or enmity. We should find a middle ground where we permit our differences to shine.²⁷⁹

Cheryl Bruno, Joe Steve Swick III, and Nicholas S. Literski have been commendable examples of how such friendship can be extended despite important differences of opinion. For example, speaking for himself and not necessarily for his co-authors, Literski frankly admits that he attributes novel elements in the Nauvoo Temple ordinances to “human genius,” while graciously acknowledging that others, like myself, will see the process as involving “divine inspiration.” In a personal communication, he said the following: “You come down on divine inspiration, and I respect your position. I come down on human genius and hope you can afford the same spaciousness for my views. In the end, we may well be looking at a combination of the two!”²⁸⁰ I pray that such examples of mutual respect within the community of scholars will continue to multiply and flourish.

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Endnotes

- 1 Cheryl L. Bruno, Joe Steve Swick III, and Nicholas S. Literski, *Method Infinite: Freemasonry and the Mormon Restoration* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2022), ix, xvi.
- 2 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 447.
- 3 As one example of the development of the temple endowment drama after the death of Joseph Smith, it is known that Brigham Young expanded the narrative to include Peter, James, and John. See Heber C. Kimball Journal kept by William Clayton, entry for December 13, 1845, published in Devery S. Anderson, ed., *The Development of LDS Temple Worship, 1846–2000: A Documentary History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2011), 21.
- 4 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 250.
- 5 Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and the Origins of Latter-day Saint Temple Ordinances* (Orem, UT, and Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2022).
- 6 Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Freemasonry and the Origins of Modern Temple Ordinances,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 15 (2015): 159–237, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/freemasonry-and-the-origins-of-modern-temple-ordinances/>.
- 7 Some initial ideas relating to this new research were presented in a lecture series in October 2021 that I hope will be published, along with essays by other scholars on Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo teachings, in the next year or so. The Interpreter Foundation, “Jeffrey M. Bradshaw: Freemasonry and the Origins of Modern Temple Ordinances,” video, 1:18:20, October 18, 2021, “Come, Follow Me” virtual fireside presentation, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6VxyY2Y7ac>. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Freemasonry and the Origins of Latter-day Saint Temple Ordinances,” in *Joseph Smith: A Life Lived in Crescendo*, ed. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw (Orem, UT, and Tooele, UT: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, forthcoming).
- 8 Michael W. Homer, “Masonry and Mormonism in Utah, 1847–1984,” *Journal of Mormon History* 18, no. 2 (1992): 57–96; Michael W. Homer, “Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry: The Relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism,” *Dialogue*:

A Journal of Mormon Thought 27, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 1–113, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45225960>.

- 9 For a more detailed account of these events from a Latter-day Saint historian with a somewhat different perspective, readers should consult the careful and balanced research in Brady G. Winslow, “Irregularities in the Work of the Nauvoo Lodge: Mormonism, Freemasonry, and Conflicting Interests on the Illinois Frontier,” *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 34, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2014): 58–79, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43200598>; and Brady G. Winslow, “‘It was by Reason of Being Mormons That We Were Kept at Arms Length’: Mormonism, Freemasonry, and Conflicting Interests on the Illinois Frontier” (master’s thesis, Baylor University, 2014), <https://baylor-ir.tdl.org/handle/2104/9198>.
- 10 In an email, Stephen T. Whitlock remarked, “I’m surprised at this as that is similar to the approach taken in William Preston, *Illustrations of Masonry*, new ed. (London: G. Wilkie, 1781), <https://books.google.com/books?id=cGJjAAAACAAJ> and earlier Masonic works. An approach largely discredited by modern Masons who no longer claim Masonry influenced every development in the ancient world. It’s a bit ironic that *Method Infinite* repeats this same general approach although in a microcosm centered around the life of Joseph Smith.” Stephen T. Whitlock, email message to author, October 17, 2022.
- 11 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 248.
- 12 See, e.g., Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise* (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and Brigham Young University Press, 2002); Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling: A Cultural Biography of Mormonism’s Founder* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 500–25.
- 13 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 134.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 143. See George Oliver, *The Antiquities of Free-Masonry; Comprising Illustrations of the Five Grand Periods of Masonry from the Creation of the World to the Dedication of King Solomon’s Temple* (London: G. and W. B. Whittaker, 1823), 88–89, https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Antiquities_of_Free_masonry.html?id=KjoiAAAAMAA.
- 15 See, e.g., John L. Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

- 1994), 169; Clyde R. Forsberg, Jr., *Equal Rites: The Book of Mormon, Masonry, Gender, and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 109–10.
- 16 See, e.g., William J. Hamblin, Daniel C. Peterson, and George L. Mitton, “Mormon in the Fiery Furnace: Or, Loftes Tryk Goes to Cambridge,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011* 6, no. 2 (1994): 53, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1207&context=msr>. Compare William J. Hamblin, Daniel C. Peterson, and George L. Mitton, “Review of *The Refiner’s Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844* by John L. Brooke,” *BYU Studies* 34, no. 4 (1994): 178, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/article/the-refiners-fire-the-making-of-mormon-cosmology-16441844-2/>.
- 17 See Stephen O. Smoot, “Framing the Book of Abraham: Presumptions and Paradigms,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 47 (2021): 274, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/framing-the-book-of-abraham-presumptions-and-paradigms/>.
- 18 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 156.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 160.
- 20 Freemasons; Nauvoo Lodge (Illinois), Nauvoo Masonic Lodge minutes, 1841–1842, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, 5, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/67a0bf8a-a1d2-4099-a3f7-e8f51b644b2d/0>. The Lodge minutes record that Hyrum Smith had been a member of the Mount Moriah Masonic Lodge.
- 21 Samuel Morris Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 174.
- 22 For example, nineteen months after Joseph Smith Sr.’s call as a missionary in D&C 4, he paid a visit to Eli Bruce, then in jail in Canandaigua for his supposed part in the William Morgan affair. Bruce recorded the visit in a journal entry:
- November 5th [1830]. — Not so much pain in my head as yesterday. Had a long talk with the father of the Smith, (Joseph Smith,) who, according to the old man’s account, is the particular favorite of Heaven!*

To him Heaven has vouchsafed to reveal its mysteries; he is the herald of the latter-day glory. The old man avers that he is commissioned by God to baptize and preach this new doctrine. He says that our Bible is much abridged and deficient; that soon the Divine will is to be made known to all, as written in the *new Bible*, or *Book of Mormon*.

Rob Morris, *The Masonic Martyr: The Biography of Eli Bruce, Sheriff of Niagara County, New York, Who, For His Attachment to the Principles of Masonry, and His Fidelity to His Trust, Was Imprisoned Twenty-Eight Months in the Canandaigua Jail* (Louisville, KY: Morris & Monsarrat, 1861), 266–67, https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Masonic_Martyr_The_Biography_of_Eli.html?id=DcQ8kgAACAAJ.

- 23 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 42.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid., 86.
- 26 Ibid., 88.
- 27 Ibid., 70–71.
- 28 Ibid., 77.
- 29 According to *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, in Jewish practice, standing was the usual posture of prayer (see, e.g., 1 Samuel 1:26; Nehemiah 9:3–5; Matthew 6:5; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11, 13), except on special occasions of deep supplication (e.g., 1 Kings 8:54; 2 Chronicles 6:13; Ezra 9:5; Daniel 6:10; Luke 22:41; Mark 1:40, 10:17). Sometime in the early Christian era, “the kneeling posture for prayer speedily became habitual among the faithful” (see, e.g., Acts 7:59, 20:36, 21:5; Ephesians 3:14; Philippians 2:10). The common practice of kneeling prayer among Christians has continued to our day. Frederick Thomas Bergh, “Genuflexion,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909), <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06423a.htm>.
- 30 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 78.
- 31 Neal E. Lambert and Richard H. Cracroft, “Literary Form and Historical Understanding: Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980): 33–42.

- 32 Don Bradley, “Acquiring an All-Seeing Eye: Joseph Smith’s First Vision as Seer Initiation and Ritual Apotheosis” (unpublished manuscript, July 19, 2010), Microsoft Word file.
- 33 For a detailed description of temple themes in the heavenly ascent of Moses 1 and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, David J. Larsen, and Stephen T. Whitlock, “Moses 1 and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*: Twin Sons of Different Mothers?” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 38 (2020): 179–290, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/moses-1-and-the-apocalypse-of-abraham-twin-sons-of-different-mothers/>.
- 34 Alvin R. Dyer, *The Meaning of Truth*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), 12n14, <https://archive.org/details/meaningoftruth00dyer>.
- 35 For example, see Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 41; Bradshaw, Larsen, and Whitlock, “Apocalypse of Abraham”; Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Enoch and the Gathering of Zion: The Witness of Ancient Texts for Modern Scripture* (Orem, Springville, and Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation, Book of Mormon Central, and Eborn Books, 2021), 242n245, <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/enoch-and-the-gathering-of-zion/>; M. Catherine Thomas, “The Brother of Jared at the Veil,” in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 388–98.
- 36 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 146.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 91.
- 38 That is, the five books of Moses, as discovered in the ritual in a “small chest, or box ... pronounced ... to be the *ark of the covenant*.” David Bernard, *Light on Masonry: A Collection of All the Most Important Documents on the Speculative Free Masonry* (Utica, NY: William Williams, 1829), <https://archive.org/details/LightOnMasonry/>, 137.
- 39 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 91.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 12–14.
- 41 Brooke, *Refiner’s Fire*. For the authors’ affirmation of Brooke’s conclusions, see Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 120.

- 42 John Brooke claimed that “Joseph Smith bore contradictory feelings about Freemasonry: he condemned the spurious tradition, while embracing the pure tradition.” Brooke, *Refiner’s Fire*, 169. “In other words,” as Hamblin, Peterson, and Mitton point out, “any positive links Brooke imagines between Masons and early Mormonism arise because Joseph was copying the ‘pure tradition,’ while his alleged anti-Masonry represents Joseph’s rejection of the ‘spurious tradition.’ Such a theory has the great advantage of being utterly unfalsifiable — everything can be influenced by Masonry, any piece of evidence can be accommodated.” Hamblin, Peterson, and Mitton, “Fiery Furnace,” 53.

Echoing non-Latter-day Saint scholar Stephen H. Webb’s statement that “Brooke’s book should be read with a fair amount of skepticism” (Stephen H. Webb, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God: Heavenly Flesh and the Metaphysics of Matter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 260), other Latter-day Saint and non-Latter-day Saint scholars have come to similar conclusions. See, e.g., Hamblin, Peterson, and Mitton, “Review of *Refiner’s Fire*”; Hamblin, Peterson, and Mitton, “Fiery Furnace”; Philip L. Barlow, “Decoding Mormonism,” *Christian Century* 113, no. 2 (January 1996): 52–55; Richard Bushman, “The Mysteries of Mormonism,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 1995): 501–508; Jan Shippis, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 204–17. None of this is to say that the Book of Mormon does not describe counterfeit priesthood groups (see., e.g., Stephen O. Smoot, “Gadantonism as a Counterfeit Temple Priesthood,” *Ploni Almoni: A Latter-day Saint Blog*, July 25, 2017, <https://www.plonialmonimormon.com/2017/07/gadantonism-as-counterfeit-temple.html>), but only that evidence of a direct Masonic connection to these passages remains conjectural.

- 43 Forsberg, *Equal Rites*, 109–10.
- 44 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 148.
- 45 2 Nephi 3; D&C 2, 13; Joseph Smith — History 1:36–41, etc.
- 46 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 91.
- 47 Isaiah 29; Ezekiel 37; 2 Nephi 27; Joseph Smith — History 1:63–65.
- 48 The legend of the “Delta” or “triangle of gold” that was found “in the ruins of the ancient temple of Enoch” is also briefly described

in the degree of the Knights of the Ninth Arch, a degree not known to be available in Nauvoo at the time of Joseph Smith (Bernard, *Light on Masonry*, 205).

- 49 Hamblin, Peterson, and Mitton, “Fiery Furnace,” 53. Compare Hamblin, Peterson, and Mitton, “Review of *Refiner’s Fire*,” 178.
- 50 Oliver, *Antiquities of Free-Masonry*, 90–91.
- 51 For a summary of these traditions with sources, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *In God’s Image and Likeness 1: Creation, Fall, and the Story of Adam and Eve* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 492, <https://archive.org/details/140123IGIL12014ReadingS>.
- 52 Thomas Smith Webb, *The Freemason’s Monitor: Or, Illustrations of Masonry: In Two Parts*, new and improved ed. (Salem, MA: Cushing and Appleton, 1808), 2:285, https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Freemason_s_Monitor.html?id=Bi8iAAAAMAAJ; Oliver, *Antiquities of Free-Masonry*, 88–90. Oliver says that the triangular plate of Enoch was placed upon “a cubical pedestal of white marble.”
- 53 Webb, *Freemason’s Monitor*, 2:284–85. Oliver gives a detailed description of the structure, saying that Enoch:
- built a temple in the bowels of the earth, the entrance to which was through nine several porches, each supported by a pair of pillars, and curiously concealed from human observation. The perpendicular depth of this temple was eighty-one feet from the surface. Enoch, Jared, and Methusaleh were the three architects who constructed this subterranean edifice; but the two latter were not acquainted with the secret motives which influenced Enoch in causing this cavern to be dug. The arches were formed in the bowels of a mountain, which was afterwards denominated Calvary in the land of Canaan; and the temple was dedicated to the living God.
- Oliver, *Antiquities of Free-Masonry*, 89.
- 54 Webb, *Freemason’s Monitor*, 2:286.
- 55 Lavina Fielding Anderson, ed., *Lucy’s Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith’s Family Memoir* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 378–79, 389.

- 56 In Webster's 1844 dictionary, the definitions of "key" include the sense of "an instrument for shutting or opening a lock" and also "that which serves to explain any thing difficult to be understood." Cynthia Hallen, ed., *Renovated Online Edition of Noah Webster's 1844 American Dictionary of the English Language*, s. v. "key," <https://edl.byu.edu/webster/term/2115049>. The dictionary also notes that the term "cipher is used for a *key* to unravel [secret] characters," meant to be "understood only by the persons who invent, or agree to use them." *Ibid.*, s. v. "cipher," <https://edl.byu.edu/webster/term/2386553>, emphasis added.
- 57 "Antimasonic Religion," *The Geauga Gazette* 3 (March 15, 1831), <http://www.sidneyrigdon.com/dbroadhu/oh/chrd1831.htm>. Reprinted in "Antimasonic Religion," *The Ohio Star* 2, no. 12 (March 24, 1831), <http://www.sidneyrigdon.com/dbroadhu/OH/misohio.htm#032431>. As an additional example, according to William Van Camp, "Joe [Smith] was a firm believer in anti-Masonry." *Rochester Union Advertiser* 30 (May 27, 1857): 2, as cited in Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 1:22n9. In an 1830 letter, the Prophet warned his brother Hyrum to "beware of the Freemasons ... Therefore beware of the Freemasons." Joseph Smith, Jr., "Letter to the Church in Colesville, 2 December 1830," Documents, Joseph Smith Papers, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, 206–207, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-the-church-in-colesville-2-december-1830/11>. However, the context hints that Joseph Smith intended here to refer to a particular group of Freemasons, some of whom were named in the letter, rather than to Freemasonry in general.
- 58 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 120.
- 59 David Whitmer gave the following description of the translation process:
- One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear.

David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ by a Witness to the Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon* (Richmond, MO, 1887), 12, <https://ia601406.us.archive.org/8/items/addressesstoallbeli00whit/addressesstoallbeli00whit.pdf>.

However, Stephen Ricks points out difficulties in Whitmer's description:

This statement is somewhat problematical from a linguistic point of view. It suggests a simple one-for-one equivalency of words in the original language of the Book of Mormon and in English. This is scarcely likely in two closely related modern languages, much less in an ancient and modern language from two different language families. An examination of any page of an interlinear text (a text with a source language, such as Greek, Latin, or Hebrew, with a translation into a target language such as English below the line) will reveal a multitude of divergences from a word-for-word translation: some words are left untranslated, some are translated with more than one word, and often the order of words in the source language does not parallel (sometimes not even closely) the word order of the target language. A word-for-word rendering, as David Whitmer's statement seems to imply, would have resulted in a syntactic and semantic puree.

Stephen D. Ricks. "Notes and Communications: Translation of the Book of Mormon: Interpreting the Evidence," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 2 (1993): 203, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1057&context=jbms>.

- 60 Brant A. Gardner, *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011), 247, 156. With respect to the Book of Mormon, scholars differ in their understanding about the degree to which the vocabulary and phrasing of Joseph Smith's translation was tightly controlled. However, there is a consensus among most believing scholars that at least some features of the plate text of the Book of Mormon survived translation. See Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 150–52, 197–204. For instance, Gardner considers, among other types of examples, the proper names of the Book of Mormon as specific instances of literal translation. He also finds examples of structural elements (e.g., chiasms and other literary features) in the Book

of Mormon that are neither random nor “part of the common repertoire available to a writer in upstate New York in the 1830s. They represent features of the plate text that have survived the translation process.” Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 204. For summary discussions of Gardner’s detailed analyses provided throughout the book, see Gardner, *Gift and Power*, especially 227–47, 279–83.

- 61 Though the English translation of the Book of Mormon seems to have involved an important visual component, it was not a merely mechanical process of “reading” in the ordinary sense. Brant Gardner has discussed possible explanations for how pre-linguistic inspiration and the mental/physiological processes of using a seer stone might have come together during translation (Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 318–19). Although Gardner’s proposal cannot tell us anything about the process of inspiration itself, it suggests how revelation about the contents of the Nephite record could have been mediated by mental processes that were involved in the choice of specific English words in translation.

Apart from cognitive considerations, one’s fitness to translate by the gift of divine seership is inescapably a religious and moral matter. Whatever help one’s native gifts, cultural milieu, personal experience, educational opportunities, or even divinely prepared “technology” might provide to a translator devoid of scholarly method and critical apparatus, it would be insufficient compensation for the essential prerequisites that enable the Holy Ghost to be a “constant companion” (D&C 121:46) to the translator. As Greg Smith observed, the necessary virtue to access God’s power

is not something that can be granted simply by more [mental or technologically-assisted] processing speed — as if I would be kinder and wiser if I could access a thousand articles in an hour instead of ten. ...We do not become like God through achieving technological mastery, or through any other exercise of power over nature. The challenge is not finding individuals who can master and carry out a scientific or technical program. Instead, the difficulty lies in finding or developing those who will not abuse power when they have it (see D&C 121:39).

Gregory L. Smith, personal communication to author, July 12, 2016.

- 62 See, e.g., D&C 9:7–9.
- 63 Note that Joseph Smith declined to relate the specifics of the translation process himself even in response to direct questioning in private company from believing friends. For example, in response to a request in 1831 by his brother Hyrum to explain the translation process more fully, “Joseph Smith said that it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; and ... it was not expedient for him to relate these things.” Minutes, 25–26 October 1831, Documents, Joseph Smith Papers, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-25-26-october-1831/4>.
- 64 Within the Book of Mormon, “translate” and “translation” are mentioned in Mosiah 8:11, 12 (twice), 13; Alma 9:21; and Ether 5:1. By way of contrast, we find the following terms used to describe the process of rendering a text in an unknown language into a familiar tongue: “interpret” (Omni 1:20; Mosiah 8:6, 11; Mosiah 21:28; and Ether 3:22), “interpretation” (Introduction (twice); Mormon 9:34; and Ether 2:3, 4:5, 15:8), “interpreters” (Mosiah 8:13, 19; Mosiah 28:20; Alma 37:21, 24; and Ether 4:5). In addition, there is a reference to the “interpretation” of the symbolism of the tree of life (1 Nephi 11:11) and to the gift of “interpretation” of tongues (Mormon 9:7).
- 65 Kathleen Flake, “Translating Time: The Nature and Function of Joseph Smith’s Narrative Canon,” *Journal of Religion* 87, no. 4 (October 2007): 507–508, emphasis added. Cf. Grant Underwood, “Revelation, Text, and Revision: Insight from the Book of Commandments and Revelations,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (2009): 76–81, 83–84.
- 66 See, for example the following:
- *Secret combinations* (see Index, Latter-day Saint Edition of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price, 2013). Well-researched arguments against the idea of Masonic influences in the Book of Mormon based on the term “secret combinations” can be found in, for example, Nathan B. Oman, “Secret

Combinations: A Legal Analysis,” *FARMS Review* 16, no. 1 (2004): 49–73; Gregory L. Smith, “Cracking the Book of Mormon’s ‘Secret Combinations,’” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 13 (2014): 63–109, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/cracking-the-book-of-mormons-secret-combinations/>. For a more recent summary of research on the topic, see Daniel C. Peterson. “A Great Leap Backward: Where Matters Stand Now Regarding the Book of Mormon’s ‘Secret Combinations,’” in *Seek Ye Words of Wisdom: Studies of the Book of Mormon, Bible, and Temple in Honor of Stephen D. Ricks*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Gaye Strathearn, and Shon D. Hopkin (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation, 2020), 99–114.

- “Flaxen cord” (2 Nephi 26:22) and “lamb-skin” aprons (3 Nephi 4:7). See, for example, Matthew B. Brown, “Girded about with a Lambskin,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6, no. 2 (1997): 124–51; Paul Mouritsen, “Secret Combinations and Flaxen Cords: Anti-Masonic Rhetoric and the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no. 1 (2003): 64–77; Gregory L. Smith, “Gossamer Thin: 2 Nephi’s ‘Flaxen Cord’ and the Anti-Masonic Thesis,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 30 (2018): 331–70, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/gossamer-thin-2-nephis-flaxen-cord-and-the-anti-masonic-thesis/>.

67 See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel* (Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2014), 213, 218, 236, 240–41, 245, <https://archive.org/details/131203ImageAndLikeness2ReadingS>.

68 See Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 190–210.

69 See, e.g., Kevin L. Barney, “On the Etymology of Deseret,” *BCC Papers* 1, no. 2 (November 2006), <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/etymology-deseret>; “How Can Honest Labor and Self-Reliance Bring Lasting Happiness?” KnowWhys, Book of Mormon Central, September 19, 2017, https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/sites/default/files/archive-files/pdf/book-mormon-central-staff/2017-09-21/knowwhy_365.pdf; “Where Does the Word ‘Deseret’ Come From? (Ether 2:3),”

- KnoWhys, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/knowhy-236-where-does-word-“deseret”-come-ether-23>.
- 70 For more on the triple title referring to the offices of “prophet, priest, and king” anciently and in modern scripture and temple-related contexts, see Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 269–82.
- 71 See, in addition to the examples of studies in the notes listed immediately above, the many additional articles and archive entries at <https://bookofmormoncentral.org>, <https://fairlatterdaysaints.org>, <https://byustudies.byu.edu>, and <https://interpreterfoundation.org> that bear on these and many other subjects.
- 72 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 132.
- 73 See, e.g., Bradshaw, *Image and Likeness 1*, 95–96.
- 74 See, e.g., *ibid.*, 94–95n1f; Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Frequently Asked Questions about Science and Genesis,” in *Science and Mormonism 1: Cosmos, Earth, and Man*, ed. David H. Bailey et al. (Orem, UT, and Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2016), 202, <https://archive.org/details/CosmosEarthAndManscienceAndMormonism1>.
- 75 See, for example, sources cited in Bradshaw, *Image and Likeness 1*, 94–96; Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *The First Days and the Last Days: A Verse-By-Verse Commentary on the Book of Moses and JS — Matthew in Light of the Temple* (Orem, UT, and Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2021), 47. On the creation as organization, see in particular the work of non-Latter-day Saint scholar John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 72–73, 75; John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 116–17, 178–84.
- 76 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 133n43.
- 77 David Calabro, “‘This Thing is a Similitude’: A Typological Approach to Moses 5:4–15 and Ancient Apocryphal Literature,” in *Tracing Ancient Threads in the Book of Moses: Inspired Origins, Temple Contexts, and Literary Qualities*, ed. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, David Rolph Seely, John W. Welch, and Scott A. Gordon, (Orem, UT, and Salt Lake City: Interpreter Foundation and Eborn

Books, 2021), 1:469–504, <https://interpreterfoundation.org/conferences/2020-book-of-moses-conference/papers/calabro/>.

- 78 See, e.g., Bradshaw, *Enoch*, 51–53.
- 79 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 136.
- 80 Ibid., 134.
- 81 Hugh W. Nibley, *Ancient Documents and the Pearl of Great Price* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1994), 12.
- 82 D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 209.
- 83 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 133–34.
- 84 See, e.g., Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 242; Matthew L. Bowen, “Getting Cain and Gain,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 15 (2015): 115–41, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/getting-cain-and-gain/>.
- 85 Stephen O. Smoot, *The Pearl of Great Price: A Study Edition for Latter-day Saints* (Springville, UT: Book of Mormon Central, 2022), 27n5, 26–31, <https://biblecentral.info/library/book/pearl-of-great-price-study-edition/>.
- 86 Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Matthew L. Bowen, and Ryan Dahle, “Where Did the Names ‘Mahaway’ and ‘Mahujah’ Come From?: A Response to Colby Townsend’s ‘Returning to the Sources,’ Part 2 of 2,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 40 (2020): 238n140, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/where-did-the-names-mahaway-and-mahujah-come-from-a-response-to-colby-townsend-s-returning-to-the-sources-part-2-of-2/>. Matt Bowen notes the intriguing

paronomastic connection with MH̄Y/MH̄H (“wipe out,” “annihilate” — i.e., “blot out”). ... [This is especially interesting] since this name occurs in the degenerate line of Cain before the Flood (cf. the use of this verb in Genesis 6:7 and 7:4). I’m even more intrigued by a possible connection between this root and the name-title “Mahan” in “Master Mahan,” which could easily be MH̄N (with N as an appellative), which might suggest the idea of “destroyer” or “annihilator.”

- 87 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 136.

- 88 Ibid., 138.
- 89 Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 211–13, citing Oliver, *Antiquities of Free-Masonry*, 88–92.
- 90 See Bradshaw, *Enoch*; Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Moses 6–7 and the *Book of Giants*: Remarkable Witnesses of Enoch’s Ministry,” in *Tracing Ancient Threads in the Book of Moses: Inspired Origins, Temple Contexts, and Literary Qualities*, ed. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, David Rolph Seely, John W. Welch, and Scott A. Gordon (Orem, UT, and Salt Lake City: Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2021), 2:1041–256, <http://templethemes.net/publications/210911-Bradshaw-jmb-s.pdf>. For a summary of the findings, see Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 211–15.
- 91 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 139.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 Although “keys” is used in the Doctrine and Covenants in some cases that could be understood as referring to means of translation, decipherment, or special access (e.g., D&C 6:28; 27:5; 35:18, 25; 64:5; 84:19; 124:95; 128:11, 14; 129:9; 130:11), the book does not specifically cite or discuss any of these.
- 94 D&C 68:17; 107:15; 124:128.
- 95 *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. “key,” <https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/key>.
- 96 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 141.
- 97 Ibid., 142.
- 98 Ibid.
- 99 Ibid., 143. See Oliver, *Antiquities of Free-Masonry*, 88–89.
- 100 Oliver, *Antiquities of Free-Masonry*, 88.
- 101 Discourse, between circa 26 June and circa 4 August 1839–A, as Reported by Willard Richards, 65, Discourses, Joseph Smith Papers, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-between-circa-26-june-and-circa-4-august-1839-a-as-reported-by-willard-richards/3>.
- 102 Oliver, *Antiquities of Free-Masonry*, 89.
- 103 Discourse Reported by Willard Richards, 65.

- 104 See, e.g., Bradshaw, *Image and Likeness 1*, 458. For more on the background of this event and the revelations surrounding it, see 622–26.
- 105 Joseph Smith Jr., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 351–52, <https://scriptures.byu.edu/tpjs/STPJS.pdf>. Compare Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980), 341, 345, 351, 359, 361, <https://rsc.byu.edu/book/words-joseph-smith>. See also J. Smith Jr., *Teachings*, 158.
- 106 See, e.g., D&C 131:7, 130:22.
- 107 Ron Hellings, “Joseph Smith and Modern Cosmology,” in *Science and Mormonism 1: Cosmos, Earth, and Man*, ed. David H. Bailey et al. (Orem, UT, and Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2016), 274.
- 108 *Ibid.*, 289–90. Importantly, Hellings describes a few caveats to this correspondence.
- 109 E.g., Romans 12:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22, 3:8; 1 John 2:10, 3:10–21.
- 110 Don Bradley, “‘The Grand Fundamental Principles of Mormonism’: Joseph Smith’s Unfinished Reformation,” *Sunstone* (April 2006): 32–41, <https://sunstone.org/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/141-32-41.pdf>.
- 111 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 145.
- 112 *Ibid.*, 148.
- 113 For up-to-date, highly readable summaries of current evidence relating to how the Book of Abraham was translated, see Stephen O. Smoot et al., *A Guide to the Book of Abraham: Insights and Current Research* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, forthcoming); Kerry Muhlestein, *Let’s Talk about the Book of Abraham* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2022); John Gee, *An Introduction to the Book of Abraham* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2017), 13–22.
- 114 Gee, *Introduction*, 84–86.
- 115 John A. Tvedtnes, “The Use of Mnemonic Devices in Oral Traditions, as Exemplified by the Book of Abraham and the Hor

Sensen Papyrus,” *Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.* 120 (April 1970): 2–10, <http://ancientamerica.org/library/media/HTML/hay1gflq/THE%20USE%20OF%20MNEMONIC%20DEVICES%20IN%20ORAL%20TRADITIONS.htm?n=0>.

- 116 Terry Givens and Brian M. Hauglid, *The Pearl of Greatest Price: Mormonism’s Most Controversial Scripture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 188–94. As Stephen O. Smoot has pointed out, Givens’ account of the catalyst theory should not be understood as a “post-modernist [approach] to understanding Joseph Smith’s conception of translation which attempt[s] to totally decouple the Prophet’s texts from ‘an underlying ancient source’” (Smoot, “Framing the Book of Abraham,” 290). I agree with Smoot that “Givens [is] consistently thought-provoking, informed, and insightful, and recommend him as an admirable exponent of the catalyst theory for the production of the Book of Abraham” and also recommend John S. Thompson’s “thoughtful engagement with Givens’ articulation of the catalyst theory” (Smoot, “Framing the Book of Abraham,” 323n102). See John S. Thompson, “‘We May Not Understand Our Words’: The Book of Abraham and the Concept of Translation in *The Pearl of Greatest Price*,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scripture* 41 (2020): 1–48, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/we-may-not-understand-our-words-the-book-of-abraham-and-the-concept-of-translation-in-the-pearl-of-greatest-price/>.
- 117 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 149.
- 118 For an accessible summary of evidence supporting the Book of Abraham as a record that draws on threads from the ancient world, see the forthcoming Smoot et al., *Guide to the Book of Abraham*.
- 119 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 170.
- 120 *Ibid.*, 149.
- 121 *Ibid.*, 121.
- 122 Avram R. Shannon, “The Bible Before and After: Interpretation and Translation in Antiquity and the Book of Moses,” in *Tracing Ancient Threads in the Book of Moses: Inspired Origins, Temple Contexts, and Literary Qualities*, ed. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, David Rolph Seely, John W. Welch, and Scott A. Gordon, 1:257–92. (Orem, UT, and Salt Lake City: Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2021).

- 123 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 150.
- 124 *Ibid.*, emphasis added.
- 125 *Ibid.*, 152.
- 126 See discussions in Bradshaw, *Image and Likeness 1*, 543; Jonathan A. Stapley, “Tripartite Existentialism,” *By Common Consent* (blog), April 15, 2009, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2009/04/15/tripartite-existentialism/>.
- 127 *American Dictionary of the English Language*, s. v. “intelligence,” <https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/intelligence>. See also the discussion in Brigham Henry Roberts, *The Truth, the Way, the Life: An Elementary Treatise on Theology*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 1994), 77–84.
- 128 Stephen O. Smoot, “Council, Chaos, and Creation in the Book of Abraham,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 22, no. 2 (2013): 28–39.
- 129 David E. Bokovoy, “‘Ye Really Are Gods’: A Response to Michael Heiser Concerning the LDS Use of Psalm 82 and the Gospel of John,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 19, no. 1 (2007): 267–313, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1702&context=msr>.
- 130 Givens and Hauglid, *Pearl of Greatest Price*, 125–28.
- 131 Smoot et al., *Guide to the Book of Abraham*; Bradshaw, *Image and Likeness 1*, 93–94, 111–12, 220–23, 244, 302–303, 514–18.
- 132 See the citation of Psalm 82:1 in Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 153. See also Bradshaw, *Image and Likeness 1*, 93–94, 111–12.
- 133 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 154.
- 134 John Gee, “Eyewitness, Hearsay, and Physical Evidence of the Joseph Smith Papyri,” in *The Disciple as Witness: Essays on Latter-day Saint History and Doctrine in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges, 1:175–217 (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/eyewitness-hearsay-and-physical-evidence-joseph-smith-papyri>. See also Gee, *Introduction*, 14.

- 135 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 160n41. See Klaus Baer, “The Breathing Permit of Hôr: A Translation of the Apparent Source of the Book of Abraham,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3, no. 3 (Autumn 1968): 109–34, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/45224026.pdf>.
- 136 Michael D. Rhodes, *The Hor Book of Breathings: A Translation and Commentary* (Provo, UT: FARMS and Brigham Young University, 2002); Michael D. Rhodes, *Books of the Dead Belonging to Tshemmin and Neferirnub: A Translation and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 2010); Robert K. Ritner, *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri: A Complete Edition* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2013).
- 137 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 154, emphasis added.
- 138 George Oliver, *Signs and Symbols Illustrated and Explained in a Course of Twelve Lectures on Freemasonry* (London: Sherwood, Gilbert, and Piper, 1837), 118, <https://archive.org/details/george-oliver-signs-and-symbols-illustrated-and-explained-freemasonry/>. Cited in part in Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 155–56.
- 139 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 156.
- 140 See John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, eds., *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001). Index entries to relevant stories of Abraham and sacrifice can be found on pages 539–43.
- 141 David Calabro, “Gestures of Praise: Lifting and Spreading the Hands in Biblical Prayer,” in *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament*, ed. David Rolph Seely, Jeffrey R. Chadwick, and Matthew J. Grey, (Provo, UT, and Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University and Deseret Book, 2013), 105–21, <https://rsc.byu.edu/ascending-mountain-lord/context-old-testament-temple-worship-early-ancient-egyptian-rites>.
- 142 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 156.
- 143 Concerning Abraham, Oliver writes that “his knowledge of astronomy enabled him to take a correct survey of the celestial system” and that he was “said by Josephus to have taught the Egyptians astronomy and arithmetic, of which sciences they were utterly ignorant before his time.” Oliver, *Antiquities of Free-*

Masonry, 155, 81. Compare Flavius Josephus, “The Antiquities of the Jews,” in *The Genuine Works of Flavius Josephus, the Jewish Historian* [. . .], trans. William Whiston (London: W. Bowyer, 1737; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1980), 33.

144 See Lincoln H. Blumell, “Palmyra and Jerusalem: Joseph Smith’s Scriptural Texts and the Writings of Flavius Josephus,” in *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient World*, ed. Lincoln H. Blumell, Matthew J. Grey, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT, and Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, and Deseret Book, 2015), 356–406, https://rsc.byu.edu/sites/default/files/pub_content/pdf/Blumell.Palmyra%26Jerusalem.pdf; Dan Vogel, *Book of Abraham Apologetics: A Review and Critique* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2021), 121.

145 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 161.

146 *Ibid.*, 156.

147 See Tamás Mekis, *The Hypocephalus: An Ancient Egyptian Funerary Amulet* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2020), 50–51, especially 51n316, <https://dokumen.pub/qdownload/the-hypocephalus-an-ancient-egyptian-funerary-amulet-9781789693331.html>.

148 Smoot et al., *Guide to the Book of Abraham* note:

Figure 7 in Facsimile 2 was either originally drawn or copied somewhat crudely (without access to the original hypocephalus it is impossible to tell), and so it is not entirely clear if the seated figure is ithyphallic or if he has one arm at his side with the other arm clearly raised in the air. Although Egyptologists have tended to interpret Figure 7 in Facsimile 2 as ithyphallic — and that seems to be how it is depicted — it should be kept in mind, as noted above, that Min is not always depicted as such in hypocephali, so he need not necessarily be viewed as ithyphallic in Facsimile 2.

149 Michael D. Rhodes, “The Joseph Smith Hypocephalus . . . Seventeen Years Later,” preliminary report (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1994), 11, https://archive.interpreterfoundation.org/farms/pdf/preliminary_reports/Rhodes-Michael-D-The-Joseph-Smith-Hypocephalus-Seventeen-Years-Later.pdf. For a more complete description of the figure, see Smoot et al., *Guide to the Book of Abraham*.

- 150 Rhodes, “Joseph Smith Hypocephalus,” 12. Also, “The Greek writer Plutarch explained that the Wedjat-eye of Osiris represented pro/noia ‘divine providence’ (literally ‘foreknowledge’), the divine wisdom by which God oversees and cares for all of his creations. It is not unreasonable to see in this ‘the grand key words of the priesthood’ (‘The glory of God is intelligence,’ Doctrine and Covenants 93:36).” Ibid., 9.
- 151 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 158.
- 152 See, e.g., Arturo de Hoyos, *The Scottish Rite Ritual Monitor and Guide*, corrected ed. (Washington, DC: The Supreme Council, 33rd Degree, Southern Jurisdiction, 2008), 711–17.
- 153 The first Scottish Rite lodges in Illinois did not appear until the 1850s, after the Saints had already left Nauvoo, though the book states that an early version of the degree was given in the United States by 1801 (Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 158n36). However, *The Scottish Rite Ritual Monitor and Guide* states that the 31st degree was not introduced until after 1804. De Hoyos, *Scottish Rite Ritual Monitor*, 80.
- 154 See Quinten Z. Barney, “The Neglected Facsimile: An Examination and Comparative Study of Facsimile No. 3 of the Book of Abraham,” (masters thesis, Brigham Young University, 2019), and the summary in Smoot et al., *Guide to the Book of Abraham*.
- 155 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 159.
- 156 Ibid., 161. See also 157n45.
- 157 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 160.
- 158 The authors regrettably fail to cite any scholars besides Dan Vogel on this disputed subject (Vogel, *Book of Abraham Apologetics*, xvii, 93, 243–50). For a valuable critique of the shortcomings of Vogel’s work, see Smoot, “Framing the Book of Abraham.”
- 159 See Smoot, “Framing the Book of Abraham,” 274.
- 160 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 173.
- 161 Ibid., 174.
- 162 Ibid., 179.
- 163 For more on this topic, see Bradshaw, *Image and Likeness 1*, 561–63.

- 164 Elwin C. Robison, *The First Mormon Temple: Design, Construction, and Historic Context of the Kirtland Temple* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1997), 8, 24n3.
- 165 Gerrit J. Dirkmaat et al., eds., *Documents, Volume 3: February 1833–March 1834, The Joseph Smith Papers* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2014), 131–46; Joseph Smith Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1902), 1:359–62, <https://archive.org/details/HistoryOfTheChurchhcVolumes1-7original1902EditionPdf/mode/2up>.
- 166 Matthew B. Brown, *Exploring the Connection Between Mormons and Masons* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2009), 143. See, e.g., Robison, *First Mormon Temple*, 60, 63, 64, 71, 75, 76, 77.
- 167 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 180–81.
- 168 The book incorrectly describes the US Capitol cornerstone as being in the “southwest corner” (Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 181).
- 169 S. Brent Morris, *The Northeast Corner*, (Cockeysville, MD: Maryland Masonic Research Society, 1993), 23, <http://md-mrs.com/library/Northeast%20Corner.pdf>.
- 170 See, e.g., David Bernard’s 1829 exposé where he records the answer of the Entered Apprentice that “The first stone, in every masonic edifice, is, or ought to be, placed at the northeast corner; that being the place where an Entered Apprentice Mason receives his first instructions to build his future masonic edifice upon.” Bernard, *Light on Masonry*, 38; Arturo de Hoyos, *Light on Masonry: The History and Rituals of America’s Most Important Masonic Exposé* (Washington, DC: Scottish Rite Research Society, 2008), 258. This almost invariable Masonic tradition to place the cornerstone in the northeast is noted by the authors (Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 180).
- 171 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 181.
- 172 Brown, *Exploring the Connection*, 141.
- 173 Orson Pratt, “The Latter-Day Work — Obeying the Commandments,” *Journal of Discourses* 13: 354–63 (Liverpool and London: Horace S. Eldredge and Latter-day Saints’

- Book Depot, 1853–1886), https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Journal_of_Discourses/Volume_13/The_Latter-day_Work,_etc.
- 174 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 182.
- 175 Ibid., 183.
- 176 Ibid., 182.
- 177 Ibid.
- 178 Wikipedia, s.v. “Acronym,” last modified December 9, 2022, 2:31, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acronym>.
- 179 See, e.g., Edgar Allan Poe, “How to Write a Blackwood Article,” in *Prose Tales of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York City: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1845), 1:271, <https://archive.org/details/CAugusteDupin/Complete%20Tales%20-%20Selected%20Poems%20%26%20Essays/page/n1/mode/2up>.
- 180 Brown, *Exploring the Connection*, 143–44.
- 181 See, for example, D&C 88:128ff.
- 182 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 185–86.
- 183 For a survey of this subject, see, for example, Stephen D. Ricks, “Prayer with Uplifted Hands,” in *The Temple: Past, Present, and Future, Proceedings of the Fifth Interpreter Matthew B. Brown Memorial Conference, “The Temple on Mount Zion,” 7 November 2020*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw (Orem, UT, and Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2021), 197–214.
- 184 Solomon Caesar Malan, ed., *The Book of Adam and Eve: Also Called The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan: A Book of the Early Eastern Church, Translated from the Ethiopic, with Notes from the Kufale, Talmud, Midrashim, and Other Eastern Works* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1882) Reprint, (San Diego, CA: The Book Tree, 2005), 1:59. See also Moses 7:41; Hugh W. Nibley, “The Early Christian Prayer Circle,” in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, ed. Todd M. Compton and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987), 56–60; John A. Tvedtnes, “Temple Prayer in Ancient Times,” in *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999), 81–88; Marcus von Wellnitz, “The Catholic Liturgy and the Mormon Temple,” *BYU Studies* 21, no. 1 (1979): 31.

185 Hugh W. Nibley, “Temples Everywhere,” *Insights: The Newsletter of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) at Brigham Young University* 25, no. 1 (2005): 10–16, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/insights/vol25/iss1/3/>.

186 Commenting on the *orans* gesture, Emminghaus writes:

From the point of view of religious history, the lifting of the hands... is an expressive gesture of prayer to the “gods above”... General anthropology has... shown us that among all peoples, the offering and showing of the open palms, which therefore cannot hold weapons or anything dangerous, is a sign of peaceful intent... Thus open hands uplifted are a universal gesture of peace, confidence, and petition; in contrast, a clenched fist means threat and challenge to battle. In the Old Testament, lifting the hands to God (Exodus 9:29, 33; Psalm 28:2, 63:5, 88:10), or toward the Temple (1 Kings 8:38) was a universal custom. This Jewish gesture of prayer was apparently adopted by Christians for private as well as communal prayer. Tertullian refers to it... The Jews, because of their feelings of guilt, do not dare to lift their hands to Christ. “But we not only lift them, but even extend them, imitating the Lord’s passion, as we also confess Christ in prayer.” The oldest depiction of the crucifixion of Christ (still very muted, because otherwise so scandalous to Romans), on the wooden portals of Santa Sabina on the Aventine in Rome (6th c.) shows the crucified Lord with slightly bent arms and open, nailed hands, but without an express depiction of the cross — almost as if he were standing in front of the framework of a house. This is precisely the form of the *orans* posture as Tertullian pictures it: In the Christians who are praying in this way, the Father also sees the dying son on the cross. Naturally, this interpretation of the *orans* posture is secondary and allegorizing, but it is still interesting and revealing.

Johannes H. Emminghaus, *The Eucharist: Essence, Form, Celebration*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 133. See Richard H. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art: A Hieroglyphic Guide to Ancient Egyptian Painting and Sculpture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006), 28–29, for a discussion of the lifting of hands in Egyptian worship.

- 187 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 188, citing Webb, *Freemason's Monitor*, 1:178–79.
- 188 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 190.
- 189 *Ibid.*, 86.
- 190 *Ibid.*, 193.
- 191 *Ibid.* See *The Book of the Scarlet Line: Heroines of Jericho* (Richmond, VA: Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply, 1976), 101. Compare J. B. Green, *Green's Manual of the Court of the Heroines of Jericho*, third ed. (Jacksonville, FL: J. B. Green, 1919), 104, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Green_s_Manual_of_the_Court_of_Heroines/Qj44AQAAMAAJ?hl=en; Moses Dickson, *Landmarks and Ceremonies of Courts of Heroines of Jericho* (Cairo, IL: E. A. Burnett, 1884), 44, 48, <https://archive.org/details/landmarksceremon00dick>.
- 192 See, e.g., Leviticus 23:39–43.
- 193 See, e.g., Psalm 118, including verse 25 where short prayers of Hosanna are described. For more on this and related subjects, see John H. Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 403–406; Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses*, 2014 update ed. (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 71–76, <https://archive.org/download/150904TempleThemesInTheBookOfMoses2014UpdatedEditionSReading>.
- 194 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 194–95.
- 195 *Ibid.*, 327–28.
- 196 *Ibid.*, 325–27.
- 197 Regarding the relevant use of the compass in Entered Apprentice degree, see William Morgan, *Illustrations of Masonry by One of the Fraternity Who Has Devoted Thirty Years to the Subject* (Batavia, NY: Printed for the Author, 1826), 19; William Morgan, *Morgan's Freemasonry Exposed and Explained: Showing the Origin, History and Nature of Masonry, Its Effects on the Government, and the Christian Religion and Containing a Key to All the Degrees of Freemasonry, Giving a Clear and Correct View of the Manner of Conferring the Different Degrees, as Practiced in All Lodges throughout the Globe, Together with the Means to be Used by Such as Are Not Masons to Gain Admission Therein, with the Verdict of*

- the Jury in Relation to the Abduction and Murder of the Author, The Whole Intended as a Guide to the Craft and a Light to the Unenlightened* (New York: Fitzgerald Publishing, 1882), 7–8, <https://archive.org/details/morgansfreemason00morg/>. Regarding the use of the square in the later Fellowcraft degree, see Morgan, *Illustrations of Masonry*, 47; Morgan, *Freemasonry Exposed*, 30. For a detailed discussion and comparison with Latter-day Saint usage of these symbols in sacred temple clothing, see Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 119–26.
- 198 Hebrews 10:19–20. For more details, see Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 121–22.
- 199 Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 119–26.
- 200 Jacob Strong, “Of Mormons and Masons,” *Tria Prima* (blog), October 26, 2021, <https://triaprima.co/2021/10/26/of-mormons-and-masons-freemason-lds/>.
- 201 See John A. Tvedtnes, “Priestly Clothing in Bible Times,” in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 662–95.
- 202 See Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 330–31.
- 203 Indeed, Jeremy L. Cross observed: “Those who elevate masonry to a level with revealed religion, and those who rank it below the standard of pure morality, are equally unacquainted with its true object.” Jeremy L. Cross, *The True Masonic Chart, or Hieroglyphic Monitor; Containing All the Emblems Explained*, fourth ed. (New Haven: T.G. Woodward, 1826), 6, <https://archive.org/details/CrossJLTheTrueMasonicChartOrHieroglyphicMonitor1826NewHavenConn/>.
- 204 It must be observed that the degrees conferred by various Masonic organizations like the York Rite (or American Rite) are not, strictly speaking, part of basic Masonry, the Blue Lodge. They require prior Masonic affiliation in order to qualify for membership and build on the base the Blue Lodge establishes, with further instruction on moral principles. Joseph Smith was not initiated into Royal Arch Masonry, though some of his close associates were.
- 205 Salem Town, *A System of Speculative Masonry, In Its Origin, Patronage, Dissemination, Principles, Duties, and Ultimate Designs, Laid Open for the Examination of the Serious and Candid: Being*

a Course of Lectures, Exhibited before the Grand Chapter of the State of New York, at Their Annual Meetings, Held in Temple Chapter Room, in the City of Albany (Salem, NY: Dodd and Stevenson, 1818), 81, <http://books.google.com/books?id=kSoiAAAAMAAJ>.

- 206 For example, see Hebrews 6:18–20; Revelation 1:6, 3:21, 5:10.
- 207 See, for example, Hugh W. Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, second ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975); Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Ronan James Head, “The Investiture Panel at Mari and Rituals of Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East,” *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 4 (2012): 1–42, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/sba/vol4/iss1/1/>.
- 208 This confluence of ultimate purpose is consistent with a traditional prayer of lodge opening which concludes with the petition: “when the trials of our probationary state are over, [may we] be admitted into the temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” De Hoyos, *Light on Masonry*, 236.
- 209 For example, Albert G. Mackey, *The Symbolism of Freemasonry: Illustrating and Explaining Its Science and Philosophy, Its Legends, Myths, and Symbols* (New York: Clark and Maynard, 1882), 166–73.
- 210 For example, Michael S. Neuberger, *Whence We Came: Vol. 2 — Dionysian Artificers* (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Grand Lodge, 2017), <https://www.newjerseygrandlodge.org/whence-we-came-vol-2-dionysian-artificers/>.
- 211 Walter Leslie Wilmshurst, *The Meaning of Masonry*, fifth ed. (London: P. Lund, Humphries & Co.; W. Rider & Son, 1922), <https://www.sacred-texts.com/mas/mom/index.htm>.
- 212 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 331.
- 213 Ibid.
- 214 Genesis 32. See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Matthew L. Bowen, “Jacob’s Temple Journey to Haran and Back,” in *Proceedings of the Sixth Interpreter Foundation Matthew B. Brown Memorial Conference, 4–5 November 2022*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, (Orem, UT, and Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, forthcoming).
- 215 See Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 196.
- 216 1 Kings 17:21–22; 2 Kings 4:34–35. The account of Elijah reads as follows:

And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. (1 Kings 17:21–22)

- 217 “The Edinburgh Register House Manuscript (1696),” The Old Charges (website), Guy Chassagnard, <http://theoldcharges.com/chapter-21.html>.
- 218 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 346. For more on the history and significance of the “Mason Word,” see de Hoyos, *Scottish Rite Ritual Monitor*, 86–100.
- 219 See Avery Allyn, *A Ritual of Freemasonry, Illustrated by Numerous Engravings, to Which is Added a Key to the Phi Beta Kappa, the Orange, and Odd Fellows Societies, With Notes and Remarks* (Philadelphia: John Clarke, 1831), 80, https://books.google.com/books/about/A_Ritual_of_Freemasonry_To_which_is_adde.html?id=0ENfAAAACAAJ.
- 220 Morgan, *Illustrations of Masonry*, 76; Morgan, *Freemasonry Exposed*, 54.
- 221 For a discussion of the conversation at the veil mentioned in D&C 124:39 and described in more detail in the biblical story of Jacob and other ancient sources, see Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 201–10.
- 222 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 343.
- 223 George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 205.
- 224 Nick Literski asks, “Can you honestly tell me that you have never felt a sense of bonding between you and the veil worker (as a fellow human), when you participated in that embrace at the veil? He explicitly represents ‘the Lord’ (whichever ‘lord’ that refers to), but there is still a very human element there.” Nicholas S. Literski, email message to author, July 23, 2022.
- 225 See Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 190–210.
- 226 See Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 332–35.
- 227 Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith, Prophet’s Wife, “Elect Lady,” Polygamy’s Foe*, second ed. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 105.

- See Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 335n60. The secondhand quote seems to be from questions 214, 786, and 966.
- 228 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 335.
- 229 See question 254 put to Bathsheba Smith. “Smith, Bathsheba, Temple Lot Case testimony, respondent’s testimony, part 3,” Mormon Polygamy Documents (website), 302, <https://mormonpolygamymdocuments.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Bathsheba-Smith-testimony.pdf>.
- 230 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 335.
- 231 See question 253, “Smith Temple Lot testimony,” 302.
- 232 See “Smith Temple Lot testimony,” 303.
- 233 David H. Dodd and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Leading Questions and Memory: Pragmatic Constraints,” *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior* 19 (1980): 695–704, <https://www.jeffreymbradshaw.net/publications/Dodd-sdarticle.pdf>; <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Leading-questions-and-memory%3A-Pragmatic-constraints-Dodd-Bradshaw/626f1bd9bb9307a392b255d03d97766c4fbbec27>.
- 234 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 335–38.
- 235 Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 248–62.
- 236 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 320.
- 237 Ibid.
- 238 See, for example, Albert G. Mackey, who describes the elements of “the new system” as “innovations, which sprung up in 1842 at the Baltimore Convention,” and replaced “the old and genuine one, which was originally taught in England by Preston, and in this country by Webb.” However, Mackey is surely mistaken on dating the “innovation” to 1842, since William Morgan published something similar to the “new system” in his 1826 exposé. Albert G. Mackey, *A New and Revised Edition of an Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences Comprising the Whole Range of Arts, Sciences, and Literature as Connected with the Institution*, new and rev. ed., (Chicago: The Masonic History Company, 1921), s. v. “Points of Fellowship, Five,” <https://www.electricscotland.com/History/freemasonry/anencyclopedia02.pdf>. Morgan, *Freemasonry Exposed*, 54.

However, the course of evolution of the ritual gesture is not a simple one. For example, in the 1696 Edinburgh Register House Manuscript, a version closer to Morgan's than Prescott's or Webb's can be found.

- 239 Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 320.
- 240 For example, Mackey, *Symbolism of Freemasonry*, 166–73; Neuberger, *Whence We Came*, to name a couple.
- 241 Wilmshurst, *Meaning of Masonry*.
- 242 For a discussion of how many common pitfalls in comparative research can be avoided, see Bradshaw, Larsen, and Whitlock, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 185–88. I have employed this approach to a greater or lesser degree of thoroughness in these additional comparative studies: Bradshaw, *Enoch*, 163–73; Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 184–96.
- 243 Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*.
- 244 Cf. John W. Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4, no. 2 (1995): 6–7, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol4/iss2/1/>. See also Nicholas J. Frederick's criterion of “proximity” as discussed in Laura Harris Hales and Nicholas J. Frederick, “Intertextuality in the Book of Mormon with Nick Frederick,” August 22, 2018, in *LDS Perspectives Podcast*, MP3 audio, 39:34, <https://ldsperspectives.com/2018/08/22/intertextuality-book-mormon/>.
- 245 John Eugene Seach, “Was Freemasonry derived from Mormonism?” *SHIELDS: Scholarly and Historical Information Exchange for Latter-day Saints* (blog), <http://www.shields-research.org/General/Masonry.html>, emphasis in original.
- 246 George L. Mitton, personal communication to author, October 30, 2022.
- 247 Matthew Brown made this partial list of elements in the rites of Freemasonry that are unrelated to temple ordinances:
- Elements of this type which can be found in Masonic publications from the time of Joseph Smith include: officers who are present during ceremonies (master, wardens, deacons, treasurer, secretary), three candles/lights, circumambulation, emphasis on cardinal directions, call from labor to refreshment, the Great Architect of the

Universe, opening and closing prayer, business proceedings, balloting for candidates, blindfold, cable-tow/rope, space is called a lodge, the holy lodge of St. John at Jerusalem, candidate declares trust in God, sharp object being pressed against candidate's body, reading of a Psalm, ritualized walking steps, touching of the Bible to take an oath, mention of the parts, points, and secret arts of Freemasonry, clapping of hands/"the shock," stamping the floor, pillars Jachin and Boaz, Solomon's temple, different ways of wearing an apron, working tools of a mason (twenty-four-inch gauge, gavel, trowel), jewels, check-words, divested of all metals, candidate asked to give a metallic memorial, ritualized method of standing, motion given for closing the lodge, asking if the assembly is satisfied with proceedings, entire lecture of each degree in Q&A format, placement of legs and feet in a symbolic shape, clothing configuration that signifies distress/destitution, the teaching that the left side is the weakest part of the body, ... the apron represents innocence, cornerstone placement in the northeast, mention of a charter that enables work to be performed, wisdom-beauty-strength, Jacob's ladder, faith-hope-charity, ornaments/checkered pavement-indented tessels-blazing star, Bethlehem, trestle board, rough ashlar, perfect ashlar, churches and chapels, Moses and the Red Sea, King Solomon as an ancient Grand Master, St. John the Evangelist and St. John the Baptist, politics, the value of two cents and one cent, swearing to support the constitution of the Grand Lodge, the valley of Jehosaphat, Succoth and Zaradatha, changing configuration of mason tools, kissing the scriptures, lettering or syllabing words, symbol-filled floor carpet, mention of speculative activity, maps of the heavens and the earth, mythological material on the pillars of Solomon's Temple serving as archives, the winding staircase in Solomon's Temple, five orders of architecture, the five human senses, seven sabbatical years, seven years of famine, seven years in building Solomon's Temple, seven golden candlesticks in Solomon's Temple, seven planets, seven wonders of the world, seven liberal arts and sciences, Jephtha and the Ephraimites, army-war-battle, the river Jordan, the letter "G" denoting Deity, the destruction of

Solomon's Temple, emphasis on geometry (and claiming geometry and Masonry were originally synonymous), Grand Master Hiram Abiff, corn and the waterford, charge to conceal another initiate's secrets, no help for the widow's son, humanity-friendship-brotherly love, so mote it be, white gloves, three ruffians, physical assault with weapons, enactment of a murder, coast of Joppa, Ethiopia, buried in the rough sands of the sea at low watermark, kingly court/judgment scene, execution of murderers, discovery of a grave, substitute word, faint letter "G" on the chest, raising of a dead body from a grave, the "traditional accounts"/Old Charges, the drawing of architectural plans and designs, a sprig of acacia/the immortal soul, a cavern in the cleft of a rock, a coffin, being buried for two weeks, monument of a weeping virgin and broken column, an urn with ashes, a depiction of Time, no rain for seven years in the daytime while the temple was being built, thousands of pillars and columns made of Parian marble to support the temple of Solomon, the king of Tyre, a pot of incense, the beehive, a book of constitutions, Tiler's sword, heart, anchor, all-seeing eye, Noah's ark, 47th problem of Euclid, hourglass, scythe, Pythagoras, Eureka, Greek language, sacrifice of a hecatomb, three stairs/three stages of life/Entered Apprentice-Fellowcraft-Master Mason, a spade, a death-head, and due-guards.

Brown, *Exploring the Connection*, 21–23.

- 248 See "Marriage Superstitions, and the Miseries of a Bride Elect, Part 1," *The St. James' Magazine* 28) April-September 1871, 549, <https://books.google.com/books?id=nbwRAAAAYAAJ>; Charlotte Sophia Burne, ed., *Shropshire Folk-Lore: A Sheaf of Gleanings, Part III* (London: Trübner and Company, 1886), 646, <https://archive.org/details/shropshirefolk101jackgoog>. Though the first known published sources of the phrase are Victorian, the tradition may be older.
- 249 Notes from a personal conversation on November 14, 2014. Joe also used this phrase, with minor variation, in various online postings.
- 250 One simple example of this idea is when President Dieter F. Uchtdorf made seer stones more intelligible to modern Saints by comparing them to cell phones. "President Utchtdorf Shares

What He Believes About Seer Stones,” *LDS Living* (blog), June 21, 2016, <https://www.ldsiving.com/president-uchtdorf-shares-what-he-believes-about-seer-stones/s/82469>. Of course, while this analogy works well as a teaching prop, a limitation to this specific comparison, like just about any analogy, is that sacred instruments are not like machines. Hugh Nibley observed:

a machine that does things for you and tells you where to go. It’s not a magic wand, ring, book, robe, or anything like that that operates itself no matter who has it. If you get the ring of Solomon, then you have the power of Solomon. No, it doesn’t work that way. The Liahona only works like the Urim and Thummim, like seer stones and things like that, for people who qualify and know how to do it.

Hugh W. Nibley, “Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 3: Transcripts of Lectures Presented to an Honors Book of Mormon Class at Brigham Young University, 1988–1990” *Maxwell Institute Publications* (2004): 19, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/72/>.

For more on differences between sacred instruments and technology, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Foreword,” in *Name as Key-Word: Collected Essays on Onomastic Wordplay and the Temple in Mormon Scripture*, ed. Matthew L. Bowen, (Orem, UT, and Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2018), xxvii–xxviii in 17, <http://www.templethemes.net/publications/180603-Bradshaw-Foreword%20to%20Bowen-Pages%20from%20180524-Bowen%20Book%2020180524-2.pdf>; Gregory L. Smith, “What is Mormon Transhumanism? And is it Mormon?,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 29 (2018): 185–86, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/what-is-mormon-transhumanism-and-is-it-mormon/>.

- 251 See, e.g., Mark A. Tabbert, *American Freemasons: Three Centuries of Building Communities* (Lexington, MA, and New York: National Heritage Museum and New York University Press, 2005), 22.
- 252 See, e.g., Russell M. Nelson, “Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints,” *Ensign* 48, no. 11 (November 2018): 114, <https://media.lds.org/pdf/magazines/ensign-november-2018/2018-11-0000-ensign-eng.pdf>; Joseph Smith Jr., Journal 1835–1836, Journals, The Joseph Smith Papers, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/35>; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

Saints, *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 419, 91.

- 253 See Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 42–46.
- 254 For a detailed analysis of a sermon exemplifying how the Prophet mixed extensive biblically based arguments with occasional allusions to Masonic themes, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Now That We *Have* the Words of Joseph Smith, How Shall We Begin to *Understand* Them? Illustrations of Selected Challenges within the 21 May 1843 Discourse on 2 Peter 1,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 20 (2016): 47–150, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/now-that-we-have-the-words-of-joseph-smith-how-shall-we-begin-to-understand-them/>.
- 255 See, e.g., Richard C. Galbraith’s introductory essay in Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 1–3:

Ironically, of all Joseph Smith’s great accomplishments in the work of the Restoration, the one perhaps least appreciated was his immense knowledge of the scriptures. The scriptures were the brick and mortar of all his sermons, writings, and other personal communications; he quoted them, he alluded to them, he adapted them in all his speaking and writing.

The Prophet’s extensive use of the scriptures may not be obvious to the casual reader. In the book *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, for example, the Prophet appears to cite fewer than one passage of scripture every other page... But that figure misses the mark. A more careful reading of this book reveals some *twenty* scriptures for every one actually cited. When I discovered that, I began to ask, not “When is the Prophet quoting scripture,” but rather “What might he be quoting that is *not* scripture?”

... [A] computer-aided search of the *Teachings* has identified several thousand distinctive scriptural phrases or passages. These scriptural citations of the Prophet come from almost every book of the Old and New Testament and from most books and sections of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price.

- 256 See Bruno, Swick, and Literski, *Method Infinite*, 130–35.

- 257 Introduction to Interpreter Foundation, “Jeffrey M. Bradshaw,” virtual fireside presentation, to be published as an introduction to Bradshaw, “Freemasonry and Latter-day Temple Ordinances.” Used with permission.
- 258 Can we always assume that ancient traditions are true ones? No, of course not. Though this question deserves a longer answer than can be given here, consideration should be given to criteria like the following to suggest which sources of comparison are most pertinent to modern temple ordinances:
- Believing Latter-day Saints can generally rely on modern scripture and knowledge of restored priesthood ordinances as a gold standard for evaluating the worth of ancient sources.
 - They can put more confidence in ancient traditions that are closely related to or consistent with what we find in the Bible, much of ancient Judaism, and much of early Christianity than something found only in other world religions.
 - They can sometimes learn important things from sources that pre-date the Bible — for example in Egypt or the ancient Near East, realizing that Gospel ordinances and truths were revealed from the time of Adam and Eve. Fortunately, although stories and explanations relating to temple practices vary widely, patterns of ritual activities are often similar across wide stretches of time and culture. John Walton, a contemporary Old Testament scholar, has observed that “the ideology of the temple is not noticeably different in Israel than it is in the ancient Near East. The difference is in the God, not in the way the temple functions in relation to the God.” John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 129.
- 259 Introduction to Interpreter Foundation, “Jeffrey M. Bradshaw,” virtual fireside presentation, to be published as an introduction to Bradshaw, “Freemasonry and Latter-day Temple Ordinances.” Used with permission.
- 260 Joseph Smith Jr., “Letter to Isaac Galland, 22 March 1839,” in *The Joseph Smith Papers Documents, Volume 6: February 1838–*

- August 1839*, ed. Mark Ashhurst-McGee et al. (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian's Press, 2017), 384–85, orthography modernized.
- 261 “Joseph Smith Diary, by Willard Richards, 9 July 1843,” in Ehat and Cook, *Words*, 229, spelling and style modernized.
- 262 At a special conference held on 9 November 1858, Heber C. Kimball said: “The Masonry of today is received from the apostasy which took place in the days of Solomon and David. They have now and then a thing that is correct, but we have the real thing.” Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 85, <https://archive.org/details/PresidentHeberC.KimballsJournal>, citing “Manuscript History of Brigham Young,” unpublished, 13 November 1858, Church Archives, 1085.
- 263 Introduction to Interpreter Foundation, “Jeffrey M. Bradshaw,” virtual fireside presentation, to be published as an introduction to Bradshaw, “Freemasonry and Latter-day Temple Ordinances.” Used with permission.
- 264 Frederick, “Intertextuality in the Book of Mormon.”
- 265 See discussions of these three elements in Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 133–53, 191–210.
- 266 See the statement of Franklin D. Richards in Stan Larson, ed. *A Ministry of Meetings: The Apostolic Diaries of Rudger Clawson* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 42, emphasis added, <https://archive.org/details/AMinistryOfMeetingsRudgerClawson>. A collection of similar statements by Latter-day Saints and critics can be found in Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 34.
- 267 See, e.g., Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 133–53, 191–210.
- 268 Benjamin Franklin gave this famous tribute on the subject, which extolled the efficacy of Masonic signs and tokens as universal credentials:
- These signs and tokens are of no small value; they speak a universal language, and act as a password to the attention and support of the initiated in all parts of the world. They cannot be lost so long as memory retains its power. Let the possessor of them be expatriated, shipwrecked, or

imprisoned; let him be stripped of everything he has in the world; still these credentials remain and are available for use as circumstances require.

Cited in Harry LeRoy Haywood, *Symbolical Masonry: An Interpretation of the Three Degrees* (New York: George H. Doran, 1923), 131, <http://books.google.com/books?id=yIV-GQAACAAJ>.

269 Hans Memling, *The Last Judgement Triptych, Left Wing, The Blessed at the Gate to Heaven (Paradise) with St. Peter*, c. 1471, oil on wood, 221 x 73 cm, National Museum, Gdańsk, Poland, <https://www.wikiart.org/en/hans-memling/the-last-judgment-triptych-left-wing-the-blessed-at-the-gate-to-heaven-paradise-with-the-st-1470>.

270 See Morgan, *Freemasonry Exposed*, 104. Compare Bernard, *Light on Masonry*, 142; de Hoyos, *Light on Masonry*, 362.

271 Matthew B. Brown, email message to author, August 9, 2008.

272 *Bamberg Apocalypse Folio 55 recto*, c. 1000, Staatsbibliothek, Bamberg, Germany, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BambergApocalypseFolio055rNew_Jerusalem.JPG.

273 Compare one of John W. Welch's criteria for the strength of a chiasm:

A chiasm is stronger if it operates across a literary unit as a whole and not only upon fragments or sections which overlap or cut across significant organizational lines intrinsic to the text.

Welch, "Identifying Chiasmus," 6.

274 Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81, no. 1 (March 1962): 2, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3264821>. Cf. Jared Ludlow: "The more *details* of a tradition that are shared, the more likely they stem from the same core tradition." Jared W. Ludlow, "Abraham's Visions of the Heavens," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 58, emphasis added, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/abrahams-vision-heavens>.

275 See Frederick's criterion of "sequence" (Hales and Frederick, "Intertextuality").

- 276 See Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 293–94. In one instance, the use of the phrase “Holiness to the Lord,” seemed to be a toss-up.
- 277 Richard Lyman Bushman, “Beginnings,” in *The Mormon History Association’s Tanner Lectures: The First Twenty Years*, ed. Dean L. May and Reid L. Nielson (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 2, 7.
- 278 In his studies, Richard L. Bushman studiously avoids the word “parallels” in favor of “filaments.” In explaining this difference, he states:
- Any object, any idea — the Urim and Thummim, the gold plates, premortal existence — sits in a network of similar objects and ideas that can potentially illuminate and enrich the original. The filaments may not be visible to everyone who contemplates those items, because they don’t have enough knowledge to appreciate them; but to see the total meaning in culture as a whole, you have to trace the affiliations. The connections go off in all directions, probably in numberless directions. One way for us to appreciate our religion is to see it in those multitudinous connections.
- Richard Lyman Bushman and Jed L. Woodworth, “Richard Lyman Bushman,” in *Conversations with Mormon Historians*, ed. Alexander L. Baugh and Reid L. Neilson (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, Religious Studies Center, 2015), 198, <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/conversations-mormon-historians/richard-lyman-bushman>.
- 279 *Ibid.*, 208.
- 280 Nicholas Literski, email message to author, July 23, 2022. Published with permission in Bradshaw, *Freemasonry and Temple Ordinances*, 33.

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