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Of Your Own Selves Shall Men Arise

Matthew B. Brown


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On 20 April 1974 members of the Mormon History Association gathered in Nauvoo, Illinois, to hear Reed C. Durham Jr. deliver a paper entitled "Is There No Help for the Widow’s Son?" In this lecture Dr. Durham, the association’s president at the time, agreed with the anti-Mormon allegation that Joseph Smith plagiarized ritual elements from Freemasonry and used them to create the endowment ceremony for the Nauvoo Temple. The anti-Mormon community was overjoyed at this presentation, while Dr. Durham’s LDS colleagues were stunned and called his faith and good sense into question. Dr. Durham felt that perhaps his lecture had been misunderstood, so he sent a candid letter to each of the meeting’s participants attempting to clarify his position on this issue. His memorandum is insightful because it outlines how an otherwise careful scholar came to accept a very problematic point of view. From his letter we learn that (1) Dr. Durham had spent only a few months in researching his subject, (2) he was “not skillful” in handling his material, and (3) he was not sufficiently “erudite” in the matter.2


2 “To Whom It May Concern,” signed by Reed C. Durham Jr., no date, one page, copy in reviewer’s possession. Erudition is defined as “knowledge acquired by study or research,” in Random House Webster’s Dictionary, 1996 ed., 221.
For a long time it seemed that the Reed Durham incident was just a singular aberration by a sincere researcher who was trying to understand one of the puzzles of the past. But in recent years a number of publications have sprung up on the fringes of Mormonism that champion the very same anti-Mormon theory abandoned by Dr. Durham. The Mysteries of Godliness, by David John Buerger, is just one of the latest attempts by the “folk of the fringe” to discredit the message of the restoration by questioning the divine authenticity of Latter-day Saint temple rites.

The subtitle of Buerger’s book declares that it is “A History of Mormon Temple Worship,” and a quick glance at the table of contents seems to justify such a claim. But one only has to read the author’s preface in order to see that he has a rather large ax to grind. He has been offended by “enthusiastic apologists” who


have, in his opinion, made “exaggerated claims about the temple and its origins” (p. viii). He has therefore taken it upon himself to correct these unnamed enthusiasts by “providing a history of the endowment, its origins and development” (p. ix).

It is not until chapter 3, however, that Buerger reveals that his position on temple “origins” is the same as that long held by anti-Mormons. Buerger seems to realize that he is going to have a difficult time converting the LDS populace to this particular point of view. In an attempt to make his argument sound more credible, he reassures readers that his book will employ a “balance of scholarly objectivity, reverence for the sacred, regard for the sensibilities of others, and adequate documentation” (p. viii). This review will compare these promises with the actual content of the book.

**Regarding the Sensibilities of Others**

Buerger correctly notes in his preface that “some readers may feel that any discussion of [temple] ceremonies is inappropriate given their sacred nature [and also because] certain aspects of the ritual are guarded by vows of secrecy” (p. viii). Even though he acknowledges that “those who enter the temple agree to treat the ceremony with respect” (p. vii) and claims that he does not want to “offend readers,” he has nevertheless decided that his own personal “understanding about what is appropriate” will simply override these barriers (p. viii). He also believes that in order to successfully convert others to his point of view he must engage in the “unavoidable” task of discussing the temple ordinances in specific detail (p. viii). I will venture to say that most Latter-day Saints will be greatly offended by The Mysteries of Godliness, and they will feel that the author has little or no regard for their sensibilities. My personal feeling was that David Buerger was openly

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5 Other reviewers of Buerger’s book have noted that even though it contains valuable primary source material, it falls far short of its proclaimed intentions. They also warn that “those who desire to understand the spiritual aspects of temple worship and the impact of temple ceremonies on individual Latter-day Saints” will find this book disappointing. Danel W. Bachman and Kenneth W. Godfrey, review of The Mysteries of Godliness, by Buerger, BYU Studies 36/2 (1996–97): 249.
challenging and degrading the most sacred part of my religion. Other people with whom I have spoken about this book have expressed similar feelings. I wondered why Buerger would profess a desire to be nonoffensive to his audience and then produce a text that was certain to do just the opposite. I decided to learn more about the author and his book in a search for understanding.

Buerger became disaffected from the LDS Church many years ago and subsequently sold his personal library to a Salt Lake City bookstore. Buerger also donated a large collection of research materials to the Special Collections library at the University of Utah in 1983, 1986, and 1990. A register was produced for the collection that includes a biography of Buerger and a brief chronology of his life up through 1992. The following information is digested from those sources so that readers of this review will be better able to understand the man and the message behind *The Mysteries of Godliness.*

David John Buerger became involved in southern California’s counterculture and antiestablishment movements as a teenager. During this period in his life he investigated many religions, including some of a non-Christian nature. Buerger was converted to the LDS Church by the time he was eighteen. He “was most strongly drawn to study of the mysteries—speculating, for example, on the possible whereabouts of the lost ten tribes” (p. 5). He was called to serve as a full-time missionary the next year. Before he entered the mission field he became aware of the Adam-God theory and other teachings that he believed were mysteries. Speculation on these subjects became an essential part of his personal search for spiritual identity. In fact, he came to view “doctrinal speculation as an essential component of his own spiritual quest, a philosophy which was to color his attitude toward church authorities when he began writing for publication” (p. 6).

After Buerger was released as a missionary, his “interest in controversial subjects...brought him into contact with various

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6 See Karen Carver, “The David J. Buerger Papers: A Register of the Collection,” Manuscript Collection (MS 622), Manuscripts Division, Special Collections, University of Utah Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1994, 10 pages.

7 Page numbers in this section refer to Carver’s biography and chronology in “The David J. Buerger Papers.”
LDS dissidents and with scholars whose ideas ran counter to the official doctrine promulgated by the church hierarchy” (p. 6). Before enrolling as a student at Brigham Young University, he expanded this circle of acquaintances. Buerger admitted that he had a “rebellious nature” and that while at BYU “he wrote extensively on various aspects of what he saw as Mormon authoritarianism” (p. 6). He was eventually called in to meet with his stake president about a paper he had written on Wilford Woodruff’s polygamy manifesto. At this meeting he was asked to clarify his testimony of the church and was also investigated for “possible affiliation with polygamous splinter groups” (pp. 6–7). After this meeting Buerger published a paper that was critical of what he viewed to be the low quality of Brigham Young University’s scholarship, which he blamed on the church’s conservative leaders (p. 7). “By the time Buerger graduated [from BYU], he was convinced that the church hierarchy was hostile to individual doctrinal study.” He moved away from Utah and was instrumental in starting a private study group called the Bay Area Colloquium (p. 7).

Another article that Buerger was preparing for publication apparently caught the attention of the First Presidency of the LDS Church, and he was asked once again to explain his personal religious views to ecclesiastical authorities (p. 7). After this incident, Buerger’s ties to the church “became increasingly tenuous. When he presented his paper on the temple endowment ceremony at the August 1986 Sunstone Symposium, he had to borrow a temple recommend from a friend to, as he put it, ‘ma[k]e me look like a card-carrying member.’ Research became increasingly difficult [for him] when he was officially banned from entering the LDS Church Archives and Library in the summer of 1986” (p. 8). By 1987, the year that his article on the temple endowment was published in Dialogue, Buerger was losing his interest in Mormon history (p. 8). In 1992 he contacted LDS authorities and requested that his name be officially removed from the records of the church (p. 10).8

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8 The dust jacket of Buerger’s book indicates he has published several articles on LDS topics but no mention is made of the fact that he left the LDS Church two years before The Mysteries of Godliness went to press. The remarks on the dust jacket claim that this book is a “scholarly examination of the derivation and development of the temple endowment.” Art deHoyos, a Freemason who
This information not only provides insights, but also raises two serious questions. First, is Buerger solely responsible for the book's content? I was informed by the bookstore owner who bought Buerger's personal library that sometime after Buerger had become disaffected from the church, he gave material from two of his *Dialogue* articles to Signature Books and granted permission for that material to be used in any manner the publisher saw fit. An editor then meshed this material together into book form and added information to the text that was not provided by Buerger. If this is true, who is really responsible for the message behind this book—Buerger, the editor, or a publication committee? Second, Why would any publisher closely associated with the Mormon community want to distribute a book with a message that is blatantly hostile to the restorational foundation of the LDS Church?

Considering that *The Mysteries of Godliness* is now marketed by some of the most prolific anti-Mormons of all time, I really have to ask myself what category it should be

penned one of the two endorsements on the dust jacket, is sure that the temple endowment derived from “the adoption and transformation of Masonic ritual.” Michael Homer, who wrote the other endorsement, believes that the comparisons Buerger makes between Freemasonry and LDS temple rites will provide readers with a basis for “evaluating traditional exegesis associated with the subject” (emphasis added). A year after Buerger’s book was published Homer tried to distance himself from his own endorsement, arguing that he did not agree with Buerger’s method of comparing the rituals of Mormonism and Freemasonry. Michael W. Homer, letter to the editor, *Dialogue* 28/4 (1995): vi–vii. This is rather odd, given the fact that Homer himself insists that Joseph Smith’s “starting point was the rituals of Freemasonry” and claims that the Prophet “adopted and adapted some of its ‘superficial’ elements.” Homer, “Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry,” 106; see also pp. 108 and 111.

I have not confirmed the story about the editor’s unacknowledged contributions to this book, but I have noticed something about the third chapter that may be an indication of ghostwriting. This chapter is very badly edited, with over thirty mistakes in capitalization. The mistakes are of a very specific nature and they are not repeated in any other chapter of the book.


Buerger’s book has recently been offered for sale by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, both in their newsletter and on their website. I take this to mean that
placed in: Mormon, “Jack-Mormon,” cultural Mormon, or anti-Mormon?

**Reverence for the Sacred**

Buerger’s book is aimed specifically at an LDS audience, but it reads like an anti-Mormon exposé that attempts to directly undermine the restorative message of the church and labels Joseph Smith a plagiarist and a fraud. This is not reverence for the sacred. Buerger’s “reverence” for the temple is also rather puzzling. In his book he claims that the endowment takes too long and should therefore be “batch processed” so that time spent in the temple would be more of “a worshipful experience” (pp. 179–80). Perhaps this attitude explains why he deliberately chose to forego any significant treatment in his book of the “theological significance, spiritual meanings, or symbolic dimensions of the endowment” (p. vii).

Buerger’s lack of understanding about the temple manifests itself in other ways. At one point he admits that he had to ask Michael Quinn and Anthony Hutchinson to explain the Mormon concept of salvation to him (p. 2). An appeal to these two writers did not seem to help the situation, however. Buerger claims at one point in his book that those who receive the highest blessings of the temple are “not eligible for the graded degrees of judgment outlined in Doctrine and Covenants 76: they [will] be either gods or devils” (p. 124). Buerger has apparently not read Doctrine and Covenants 76:50–70; 131:1–4; 132:15–24. These passages clearly indicate that those who are exalted to the status of “gods” will reside in the highest glory of the celestial kingdom. The sons of perdition, or “devils” as Buerger calls them, are also discussed at some length in Doctrine and Covenants 76:28–38. Buerger also finds repugnant the doctrine of making one’s calling and election

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they approve of its content. Perhaps the Tanners are simply returning a favor since Buerger directs his readers to eight of their publications, many of which deal with the Freemasonry issue (pp. 141, 224–27).

12 Buerger also implies that Joseph Smith disregarded his own warnings against papism and priesthood (p. 124 n. 72).

sure because in his mind it is an "unconditional" promise of exaltation in the hereafter despite the subsequent sins that one may commit on the earth. He therefore demands that Latter-day Saints reject this doctrine (pp. 123–24, 180). Would he also insist that the apostle Peter do the same (see 2 Peter 1:10)? It is clear from his comments that Buerger does not really understand this vitally important teaching. Reed Durham admitted that his misconceptions about the temple came from a lack of learning. It seems that David Buerger employed the wrong teachers.

**Scholarly Objectivity**

The dictionary indicates that in order for someone to be *objective*, he or she must be neutral, "unbiased," and "not influenced by personal feelings." This is certainly a desirable characteristic for any serious scholar, especially when dealing with a disputable topic. At the end of *The Mysteries of Godliness*, however, the reader is presented with a lengthy list of negative feelings about temple worship that have been expressed by several unnamed individuals. It is the view of some, contends Buerger, that the temple ordinances are nonessential, irrelevant, old-fashioned, unimportant, disappointing, unusual, inconsistent, dull, boring, irrational, repetitious, uncomfortable, immature, guilt-inducing, too mechanical, degrading to women, excessively long, akin to being programmed, incongruent with important elements of religious life, and contrary to certain aspects of New Testament Christianity (pp. 178, 180). Buerger does not tell his readers whether or not he agrees with these strongly biased feelings, but one suspects that he does because he actively lobbies in his book to change the temple ceremony and the way that temple matters are administered (pp. 177, 180).

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14 For a discussion on the doctrine of making one’s calling and election sure, including its conditional nature, see Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973), 3:323–53.

15 Buerger acknowledges several individuals who contributed in one way or another to the creation of his book, including D. Michael Quinn (p. 2), Anthony A. Hutchinson (p. 2), Edward H. Ashment (p. 43), and Art deHoyos (pp. 44–46, 56, 203).

Buerger’s desire to alter temple worship to align it with his own preferences apparently springs from his personal perception that time is wasted in the house of the Lord. He reports that instead of experiencing the full temple endowment ceremony, he would much rather spend his time being instructed “in theological matters” (p. 180). Ironically, Buerger has failed to realize that the purpose of the endowment ceremony is to do that very thing.

Buerger makes one other comment that causes me to question his objectivity. He pretends to speak on behalf of the general membership of the church by claiming that “new converts,” “maturing youth,” and “today’s Saints are no longer comfortable with symbolism of any sort”; hence they do not find the temple ceremonies appealing (p. 177). No substantiation is offered for this dubious claim. Buerger never openly admits that he himself is uncomfortable with the symbolism of the endowment ceremony, yet the inclusion of today’s Saints in his statement makes me wonder how anyone with a strong bias against symbolism could possibly be objective about something as symbolic as temple ceremonies.

Adequate Documentation

Because the majority of Buerger’s book consists of quotations linked by minimal commentary, one would expect to find few, if any, problems with documentation. However, chapter 3, entitled “Joseph Smith’s Ritual,” includes a number of documentary problems, among them possible plagiarism, fabrication, misleading statements, perpetuation of myths, outdated information, and unsubstantiated claims.

Possible Plagiarism

Page 76 of The Mysteries of Godliness features an artist’s reconstruction of a possible arrangement of the endowment rooms on the Nauvoo Temple’s top floor. This drawing appeared earlier in An Intimate Chronicle: The Diaries of William Clayton, also published by Signature Books. Both, however, are nearly identical to a picture that first appeared in a copyrighted BYU Studies
article. Lisle Brown created, signed and dated the original drawing. Both Signature Books and Smith Research Associates, producer of the William Clayton diaries, fail to credit Lisle Brown as the originator of the design. In fact, they neglect to list any artist for their respective versions of this drawing. This may constitute plagiarism or even a violation of copyright law. In any case, adequate documentation is lacking.

**Fabrication**

The caption under the fifth picture in the illustrations section of *The Mysteries of Godliness* is problematic. The picture shows an architectural drawing by William Weeks of the Nauvoo Temple’s weather vane and depicts a horizontal angel, holding a trumpet in one hand and an open book in the other. A The angel is wearing a round cap and a long, flowing robe. According to the caption, the angel is also wearing slippers. This is simply not true. I have seen the original drawing in the LDS Church Archives, and the angel is plainly barefoot. If one looks closely enough at the picture in Buerger’s book, one can see the angel’s toenails. This example of “seeing things” should alert readers to the possibility that the author, or others who may have contributed to this book, might be seeing other things as well.

**Misleading Statements**

Appendix 2 is labeled “Published Descriptions of the Temple Ceremony” (p. 203), a misleading title. First, several items listed in this appendix have not been published. Second, Buerger has

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18 I also must take exception with the date assigned to this drawing by the caption writer—“ca. 1846.” The writing above the angel says “for Temple,” indicating that the sketch was made prior to the construction of the weather vane itself. Perrigrine Sessions indicated in his diary that the weather vane was attached to the Nauvoo Temple spire on 3 February 1845: “In the morning and evening of this day there was a flame of fire seen by many to rest down upon the Temple. On this day they raised the vane which is the representation of an angel in his priestly robes with the Book of Mormon in one hand and a trumpet in the other which is overlaid with gold leaf.” Perrigrine Sessions, *The Diaries of Perrigrine Sessions*, vol. B (Bountiful, Utah: Carr, 1967), 43–44.
omitted pro-Mormon sources. No mention is made of the works of John A. Widtsoe, James E. Talmage, or Boyd K. Packer. Instead, Buerger has pointed his readers almost exclusively to anti-Mormon exposes by such individuals as John C. Bennett, Fanny Stenhouse, Ann Eliza Webb, Fawn M. Brodie, Thelma Geer, Bill Schnoebelen, Jerald and Sandra Tanner, and Ed Decker. But then who could doubt the veracity of such classic statements as:

*The Gates of the Mormon hell opened, exhibiting the licentious abominations and revellings of the high priest of the Latter-day Saints Rev. Brigham Young and his 90 wives; and the vile scenes enacted by the elders and apostles with their many spiritual concubines in the secret chambers of the harem, or institution of cloistered Saints, privately attached to the temple.* (p. 214)

Buerger refers to Orson F. Whitney’s *History of Utah* as one of the sources containing “Published Descriptions of the Temple Ceremony.” Whitney’s book contains no such thing and does not serve the purpose of Buerger’s appendix. He tries to justify its inclusion by noting that on one single page “Whitney refers to the *Salt Lake Tribune* [temple] exposés and complains that sacred LDS rituals were ‘revealed by apostates’” (p. 218). Buerger apparently missed the irony of including this statement in his book. It would be interesting to see how Elder Whitney would characterize Buerger if he learned that Buerger listed him with outspoken apostates intent on discrediting sacred temple ordinances.

Another misleading statement can be seen on pages 48 and 49, where Buerger asserts that

the *History of the Church* records [Joseph] Smith in 1835 using Masonic terms to condemn the “abominations” of Protestants and praying that his “well fitted” comments “may be like a nail in a sure place, driven by the master of assemblies.” Smith’s familiarity with and positive use of Masonic imagery is paradoxical in light of his anti-secret society rhetoric during the Missouri period.
Buerger does not bother to direct his audience by way of a footnote to a single source that demonstrates that this is Masonic imagery or terminology. This language actually comes straight from the King James Bible. In Isaiah 22:23 the Lord says, “I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place,” and in Ecclesiastes 12:11 we read that the words of the wise are “as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies.” Buerger seems to believe that “well fitted” is a Masonic term, referring to the skillful fitting together of stones by stonemasons. Either he has misunderstood plain English or he deliberately misleads his readers in order to strengthen his argument. This quotation from the *History of the Church* 2:347 actually reads:

I had liberty in speaking. Some Presbyterians were present, as I afterwards learned; and I expect that some of my sayings sat like a garment that was well fitted, as I exposed their abominations in the language of the scriptures; and I pray God that it may be like a nail in a sure place, driven by the master of assemblies.

Perhaps the most misleading statement in Buerger’s book is found on page 58. Without any commentary or explanation Buerger says: “The LDS First Presidency went so far in 1911 as to refer publicly to the ‘Masonic characters [of] the ceremonies of the temple.’” This partial quotation is clearly meant to imply that the First Presidency admitted that LDS temple ordinances were pilfered from Freemasonry. But the context of the full quotation helps to clarify what the First Presidency meant by this comment. The full quotation reads: “Because of their Masonic characters the ceremonies of the temple are sacred and not for the public.”¹⁹ The term *masonic* can mean simply something that is secret. This is precisely the context of the First Presidency’s quotation.²⁰

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²⁰ Webster’s *Third New International Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. “masonic”: “suggestive of or resembling Freemasons or Freemasonry (as in display of fraternal spirit or secrecy).” Edward Tullidge also used *Masonic* as a descriptive word: “Mormon apostles and elders, with a becoming repugnance and Masonic reticence quite understandable to members of every Masonic order, have shrank [sic] from a public exhibition of the sacred things of their temple.”
Perpetuation of Myths

One indication that Buerger did not adequately research his book is that he perpetuates myths. For example, he sustains the myth that Brigham Young was a Freemason before he joined the church (pp. 49–50). Both sets of minutes from the Nauvoo
Masonic lodge have been publicly available since the early 1970s, and in note 42 Buerger indicates that he has read at least one of them. Somehow he missed out on the fact that Brigham Young was not initiated as a Mason until 1842.²¹

Buerger perpetuates another myth when he claims, without elaboration, that "some Masonic influence can be seen in the [Kirtland] temple’s architectural patterns" (p. 48). Buerger gets this idea from Reed Durham’s “Widow’s Son” lecture, but in his footnote he fails to tell readers exactly where Durham’s quotation can be found.²² None of Reed Durham’s transcribed comments are supported by any references, but they deserve to be scrutinized nevertheless. Durham made three claims: (1) the pattern of laying and dedicating cornerstones for Mormon temples and Masonic lodges is “significantly similar,” (2) the placement of presiding officers in the east and west ends of Mormon temples and Masonic lodges is “similar,” and (3) “professional architects” have determined that the “classical and Gothic elements” in the Kirtland Temple’s architecture were directly and unmistakably influenced by Freemasonry.²³ My brief response to these claims is


²² Note 29 on page 48 reads: “Durham, ‘The Widow’s Son,’ 15–33. See also Laurel B. Andrew, The Early Temples of the Mormons: An Architecture of the Millennial Kingdom in the American West (Albany: SUNY Press, 1978).” Several problems are apparent here. First, this is a different reference for the Durham material than is given in note 18 of the same chapter. The reference there is “Reed C. Durham, Jr., ‘Is There No Help for the Widow’s Son? . . .’ in Mormon Miscellaneous 1 (October 1975): 11–16.” It appears that Buerger was either not very careful with the consistency of his footnotes or note 29 may have been inserted by someone other than Buerger. Second, neither reference in note 29 is specific. “15–33” refers to the page numbers in Mervin B. Hogan’s transcription of Reed Durham’s talk. Hogan’s version was published along with another paper by the Masonic Research Lodge of Utah on 16 September 1974. Pages 3–12 of this publication consist of a paper by Jack Adamson entitled “The Treasure of the Widow’s Son,” while pages 13–14 are introductory comments by Hogan. The page with Durham’s speculations about Masonic influence on the Kirtland Temple’s architecture should have been identified as 16. I suppose that Laurel Andrew’s entire book is so convincing on this point that no specific reference was deemed necessary.

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(1) the Lord, not the Masons, revealed the ancient pattern for laying temple cornerstones to Joseph Smith (see D&C 94:6); (2) the Lord, not the Masons, showed the entire First Presidency by vision how to arrange the interior of the Kirtland Temple, including the order of the pulpits at each end;24 and (3) Freemasons had absolutely nothing to do with the creation of the “classical and Gothic” patterns that were employed throughout the Kirtland Temple. It is clear that the early Saints copied these particular patterns straight from the popular architectural manuals of their day.25

Outdated Information

Readers should remember that Buerger’s “book” is really just a conglomeration of articles that were published long ago. Buerger noted in his 1987 Dialogue article on the temple endowment that he did the research for that project back in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Surprisingly, this same note appeared in The Mysteries of Godliness in 1994 (p. 3). Why should this matter? Because, at the writing of this review, some of the perspectives and conclusions in Buerger’s “book” are close to twenty years

24 Perhaps in his eagerness to find a parallel, Dr. Durham overlooked the fact that the three main officers in Masonic lodges are stationed in the east, west, and south. No such parallel can be seen inside the Kirtland Temple where twenty-four men sat: twelve in the east and twelve in the west, above and behind each other in four tiers. For the general layout of a nineteenth-century Masonic lodge see the illustration and text in Jabez Richardson, Richardson’s Monitor of Freemasonry (Harwood Heights, Ill.: Powner, 1994), 5–6. One Masonic historian believes that the early Freemasons may have borrowed the idea of seating their officers on platforms from the Christian practice of elevating church altars; see Alex Horne, Sources of Masonic Symbolism (Fulton, Missouri: Ovid Bell Press, 1981), 68. This is a possibility, since the two men who are commonly credited with the creation of Masonic ritual were Christian ministers.

old. I decided to check the age of the footnote material found in chapter 3 because it is the linchpin chapter of the book. I discovered that out of approximately one hundred footnote items in this chapter, twenty were written in the 1980s and only six were written in the 1990s. Of those from the 1990s, one is a modern publication of an 1899 quotation that directly refutes Buerger’s thesis; one is a quotation from a self-published Masonic commentator who insists that any “informed, objective analyst” must admit to a Mormon/Masonic ritual connection; two are dated after he left the church and may have been inserted by someone other than Buerger; two are modern publications of quotations from the 1840s, and one is a citation within a footnote that has no commentary attached to it at all.

It should also be noted that, in his chapter on “Joseph Smith’s Ritual,” Buerger has confined all mention of mainstream Mormon books and articles that support the ancient background of Latter-day Saint temple rites to note 15. Even with this concession, he has only listed materials that were published between 1965 and 1979. Buerger never deals directly with the content of these writings, but instead brushes them aside with the “insight” from Ed Ashment that their content is “at odds with the theological structure of the Mormon temple” (p. 43). One of the items so casually brushed aside was Hugh Nibley’s response to Ed Ashment in his article entitled “The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham” (p. 42).26

**Unsubstantiated Claims**

Buerger makes several unsubstantiated claims in his book to support the theory that Joseph Smith plagiarized Masonic rites. As this is only a book review, I will not attempt to give these claims the full scrutiny they deserve. I hope that the information presented below will be helpful nevertheless.

- *The origin of Freemasonry is known.* For hundreds of years Freemasons have been taught during their initiation ceremonies that their rites originated at the time of King Solomon’s Temple. It has been determined in modern times that this is just a myth

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“without any historical authority.” Critics of the LDS Church have tried to turn this myth into a weapon against the authenticity of its temple rites. Buerger, for example, says that while “Latter-day Saints may feel that Masonry constitutes a biblical-times source of uncorrupted knowledge from which the temple ceremony could be drawn” by Joseph Smith, “enlightened” people know that Freemasonry was actually “a development of the craft guilds during the construction of the great European cathedrals during the tenth to seventeenth centuries” (p. 45). Ashment’s version of this argument is more complete, so I will include it here.

Joseph Smith himself indicated that he restored the ancient priesthood “signs, tokens, penalties, and keywords” of Solomon’s temple from corrupt, apostate Masonry, which accounts for several parallels between the two rituals. Unfortunately, the ultimate origin of masonic ritual is medieval Europe—not the ancient temple of Solomon, as Freemasonry asserts. Freemasonry is not old enough to be a corrupt, apostate endowment from which a modern, inspired restoration could be made.

27 Horne, King Solomon’s Temple, 29-38.
28 Ashment, “The LDS Temple Ceremony,” 295. An interesting attitude has manifested itself among certain writers when it comes to the origins of LDS temple rites. Buerger, for example, begins his book by noting that the LDS Church officially teaches that the temple ordinances are absolutely essential in order for anyone to achieve a fulness of salvation (p. vii). However, he disregards this teaching and focuses on trying to convince his readers that the endowment is not really divine, but has an earthly origin (pp. 35-68). He then ends his book by calling for his audience to reject its “mysterious transcendence” (p. 180). The Toscanos have used a slightly different approach by trying to convince the LDS community that the validity of the temple endowment is “unrelated to its historical origins.” “It doesn’t matter,” they claim, if Joseph Smith pilfered Masonic rites because the “historical origins of the endowment are irrelevant to its ritual importance.” Toscano and Toscano, Strangers in Paradox, 279. Michael Homer agrees with this view. “Ultimately,” he believes, “the efficacy of the Mormon temple ceremony does not depend on whether Joseph Smith adopted or adapted portions of the Masonic ritual when he instituted the endowment.” With this kind of an outlook it is little wonder that Homer has deliberately chosen not to “address the divine origin of the temple ceremony” in his writings and would like to discourage the “all-or-nothing” approach to this
Several things are wrong with these statements. First, the idea that Freemasonry originated with medieval European trade guilds has been discredited for a number of years now. The very best Masonic historians are still quite baffled about where their organization really came from and anyone who comments on Masonic origins should not ignore their informed judgment on this issue.

When, Why, and Where did Freemasonry originate? There is one answer to these questions: we do not know, despite all the paper and ink that has been expended in examining them. Indeed, the issues have been greatly clouded by well-meaning but ill-informed Masonic historians themselves. . . . Whether we shall ever discover the true origins of Freemasonry is open to question.29

It remains difficult, even after many years of serious investigation, to determine the true origins of Freemasonry because Masonic rites and symbols were borrowed from diverse ritual systems; even after the systems were combined to form a new initiatory rite, they still went through a lengthy period of modification.

subject. Homer, "'Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry,'" 3, 113. I believe that Hugh Nibley has an appropriate perspective to be offered in contrast to this line of reasoning: "The endowment is either the real thing or it is nothing, and if it is real or if I accept the probability that it is, I cannot compromise in the least degree. . . . eternal life is an all-or-nothing proposition." Hugh W. Nibley, "On the Sacred and the Symbolic," in Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 571.

29 Hamill, The Craft, 15, 24. John Hamill is librarian and curator of the United Grand Lodge of England. He is also a member of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076, which is considered to be the premier research organization in all Freemasonry. Hamill has outlined the myriad theories about Masonic origins in his book. Two other Masonic historians comment that an "immense amount of ingenuity has been expended on the exploration of possible origins of Freemasonry, a good deal of which is now fairly generally admitted to have been wasted. . . . Not only has no convincing evidence yet been brought forward to prove the lineal descent of our Craft from any ancient organization . . . [but] it is excessively unlikely that there was any such parentage." Fred L. Pick and G. Norman Knight, The Pocket History of Freemasonry, rev. ed. (London: Muller, 1977), 13.
There are really two separate issues to be considered—the origin of the Masonic organization and its ritual elements.

This brings me to the next point: Joseph Smith never claimed that he made an “inspired” restoration of the endowment keys “of Solomon’s temple from corrupt, apostate Masonry.” This statement is a fabrication, and I am not surprised that Ashment did not provide a footnote for it.30

What Joseph Smith did say, according to several early Saints, is most instructive. Heber C. Kimball, a Freemason since 1823, was present when the very first Nauvoo endowment was administered by the Prophet. A few weeks after receiving his ordinances, he wrote the following to Parley P. Pratt.

We have received some precious things through the Prophet on the Priesthood which would cause your soul to rejoice. I cannot give them to you on paper for they

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30 Smith, The Journals of William Clayton, xxxvii, uses phraseology that is also misleading on this point: “Mormon leaders have identified the temple ceremony as a restoration of ancient Masonic rites.” Smith does not identify the Mormon leaders who supposedly said this but I suspect that he is alluding to statements made by Heber C. Kimball, Brigham Young, and others that refer to the temple endowment as “true Masonry” or “Celestial Masonry.” For example, Heber C. Kimball said: “We have the true Masonry. The Masonry of today is received from the apostasy which took place in the days of Solomon, and David, . . . but we have the real thing,” in Stanley B. Kimball, “Heber C. Kimball & Family, the Nauvoo Years,” BYU Studies 15/4 (1975): 458 (13 November 1858). Matthias Cowley also spoke of “Freemasonry as being a counterfeit of the true masonry of the Latter-day Saints.” Larson, A Ministry of Meetings, 380 (8 January 1902). These descriptive phrases were coined by people who took Masonic claims of Solomonic origins at face value; see, for example, Brigham Young’s statement in Journal of Discourses, 11:327–28. In their minds “Masonry” was a synonym for the true temple ordinances practiced during King Solomon’s reign. Latter-day Saints do not claim that the temple endowment is Freemasonry restored to its pristine Solomonic form, however. Joseph Smith clearly taught that the endowment is a restoration of sacred ordinances that were first practiced by Adam; see History of the Church, 2:309; 4:208; see also Facsimile 2, figure 3, in the Pearl of Great Price. The early Saints believed that even though the Masonic “institution dates its origins many centuries back, it is only a perverted Priesthood stolen from the Temples of the Most High.” H. Belnap, “A Mysterious Preacher,” Juvenile Instructor 21 (15 March 1886): 91 See also the material in n. 31, which indicates that during the Nauvoo period the temple ordinances were referred to as “the true origin of Masonry” instead of “true Masonry.”
are not to be written so you must come and get them for yourself. . . . There is a similarity of Priesthood in Masonry. Brother Joseph says Masonry was taken from Priesthood but has become degenerated. But many things are perfect.\textsuperscript{31}

The only other statement that is said to have come from Joseph Smith on this subject is that of Benjamin F. Johnson, who reported:

In lighting him to bed one night he showed me his garments and explained that they were such as the Lord made for Adam from skins, and gave me such ideas pertaining to endowments as he thought proper. He told me Freemasonry, as at present, was the apostate endowments, as sectarian religion was the apostate religion.\textsuperscript{32}

From both of these secondary sources we can ascertain what Joseph Smith taught concerning Freemasonry—the ordinances of the priesthood are the original pattern from which Freemasonry derived some of its ritual elements and symbolism. And that leads us to the next unsubstantiated claim.

\textit{Neither Mormon nor Masonic rites are biblical}. According to Buerger, certain aspects of the LDS temple ceremony “seem at odds” with New Testament Christianity (p. 178). Other writers are

\textsuperscript{31} Letter from Heber C. Kimball to Parley P. Pratt, 17 June 1842, Parley P. Pratt Papers, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah, spelling and punctuation standardized. A partial transcription of this letter can be found in Kimball, “Heber C. Kimball & Family,” 458. Joseph Fielding, who received his endowment from Joseph Smith on 9 December 1843, recorded the following in his Nauvoo era journal: “Many have joined the Masonic institution. This seems to have been a stepping stone or preparation for something else, the true origin of Masonry. This I have also seen and rejoice in it. . . . I have evidence enough that Joseph is not fallen. I have seen him after giving, as I before said, the origin of Masonry.” Andrew F. Ehat, “‘They Might Have Known That He Was Not a Fallen Prophet’—The Nauvoo Journal of Joseph Fielding,” \textit{BYU Studies} 19/2 (1979): 145, 147, spelling and punctuation standardized. These remarks may reflect what the Prophet had personally taught Fielding about the nature of the temple ordinances.

\textsuperscript{32} Benjamin F. Johnson, \textit{My Life’s Review} (Independence, Missouri: Zion’s Printing, 1947), 96.
more aggressive on this point. For instance, Gregory Prince maintains that the “Bible itself describes the rituals which bear no resemblance to either Masonic or Latter-day Saint ceremonies.”

This outlook hardly differs from that of professional anti-Mormons who claim that “there is no biblical foundation for the ceremonies which Mormons practice in their temples,” the “entire ceremony is man-made,” and it is “the product of Joseph Smith’s own fruitful imagination combined with his own personal knowledge of Masonry.” At least two anti-Mormons have gone so far as to claim that since the rituals of Freemasonry are pagan in origin and since Joseph Smith plagiarized the Masonic rituals, the LDS temple ceremonies must be considered pagan as well.

Are the Masonic ceremonies pagan? Albert Mackey, perhaps the most famous of all Masonic historians, frankly admitted that Freemasonry has “borrow[ed] its symbols from every source.” It has also been acknowledged that, over time, Masonry has adopted elements from pagan ritual systems. In the early 1700s, when Masonry was first forming, it had a distinctly Christian character. The two men credited with creating the original degrees of Masonic initiation were both Christian ministers who drew their material primarily from ancient Christian documents. The

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37 In 1813 the first concerted effort was made to de-Christianize the Masonic rites; see Albert G. Mackey, *History of Freemasonry* (New York: Masonic History, 1898), 1:137. Around this time pagan elements began to be introduced into some of Masonry’s higher degrees, but scholar Delmar D. Darrah stresses that these additions have nothing to do with Masonic origins, in *History and Evolution of Freemasonry* (Chicago: Powner, 1979), 36.

38 The men responsible for creating the rites of Freemasonry and writing its first “history” were James Anderson, an ordained clergyman from the Anglican Church, and Jean Desaguliers, a Presbyterian minister from Scotland. In recent years the theory that Masonic legends and rituals came out of the Christian monasteries of England has received serious consideration; see Cyril N. Batham,
published accounts of the Masonic rites from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries demonstrate these rites to have been based firmly on the Bible. In one of these early texts, I counted about 115 elements in the three main initiation rituals alone that come straight from the Bible.\(^3\) It must be remembered, however, that even though the creators of Masonic ritual may have "drawn freely" from biblical texts, they also infused some of that material with "significantly new meanings."\(^4\)

And what about the temple rites of the Latter-day Saints? Do they have a biblical foundation, or are they simply the fraudulent creation of Joseph Smith? After several years of examining the available evidence, I am thoroughly convinced not only that the LDS temple endowment is genuinely ancient, but also that its main elements can be clearly seen within biblical texts.\(^5\)

\(^3\) Richardson, Richardson's Monitor of Freemasonry, 5-41.

\(^4\) Eric Ward, "In the Beginning Was the Word . . ." in Ars Quatuor Coronatorum 83 (1970): 306. Ward admits that Freemasons "cannot in truth claim to be a continuation of medieval operative masonry" (ibid., 301). Instead, Freemasonry was an independent creation by a group of individuals who "adapted certain simple rites and customs which they gathered from documents of the operative craft of former times and to give an aura of respectable antiquity they maintained and believed they were merely continuing an unbroken line of masonic practice and philosophy. . . . [S]peculative Masons have drawn upon material from former times, from the freestone masons, the Bible and from ancient sources unconnected with either. . . . By a long process of refinement, by adding and discarding, a system has been developed" (ibid., 302).

How then should readers react to the "pattern of resemblances" listed by Buerger and others, which seemingly indicates that Joseph Smith "drew on Masonic rites in shaping the temple endowment" (p. 56)? They should turn to page 52 of The Mysteries of Godliness, where Buerger is more forthright about the nature of these supposed "parallels." There he says only that "the Nauvoo endowment and its contemporary Masonic ritual resemble each other so closely that they are sometimes identical" (emphasis added). Buerger describes these occasionally incriminating pieces of evidence as "echoes," "similarities," "resemblances," "not unlike," "possibly," and "seeming" (pp. 55–56). Even when Buerger tries to strengthen the idea of parallelism by comparing the texts of Catherine Lewis's 1848 temple exposé and the 1826 Masonic exposé by William Morgan, he can only come up with two direct matches out of the eight items that he lists (pp. 53–55). This exercise is unimpressive.

- The chronology question. Buerger and other critics believe that the timeline of historical events can be used to demonstrate that Joseph Smith was a plagiarist. The reasoning is simple and appears to be incriminating: Joseph Smith was initiated as a Freemason in March 1842. After witnessing the Masonic rites several times, he introduced his own temple ceremony in May 1842. Since the Prophet's temple ceremony contains parallels to Freemasonic rites, he must be guilty of plagiarism (pp. 51–52). Michael Homer bolsters this argument by claiming that "there is no direct evidence that the prophet discussed or revealed the endowment to anyone before the Holy Order was initiated on May 4, 1842." In his view, the "notion that Smith was familiar with the complete endowment before he was initiated into Freemasonry is premised on faith, not facts." It is also his opinion that "the evidence upon which some Mormon writers have concluded that Smith's knowledge of the endowment preceded his association with Freemasonry is circumstantial and inconclusive."42

Ensign (September 1974): 68–73. Several articles of interest will also appear in a forthcoming volume on temples to be published by FARMS.

42 Homer, "Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry," 99–100. It is important to remember that the "Mormon writers" to whom Homer refers—John A. Widtsoe, B. H. Roberts, Melvin J. Ballard, Anthony W. Ivins, and E. Cecil McGavin—did not have the same understanding of Masonic history that modern
scholars do. While Latter-day Saints should recognize the limitations these men were under and approach their writings with appropriate caution, critics of the LDS Church need not suppose that by thrashing these outdated writings to pieces they have inflicted any real damage. Gregory Prince adds a new twist to the chronological arguments when he claims that “the Nauvoo temple was designed like the Kirtland House of the Lord for the simple reason that as late as April 1842 no differences between the Kirtland and Nauvoo endowments were anticipated.” But then he softens this statement and argues instead that the dramatic evolution between the Kirtland and Nauvoo ordinances was “apparently unanticipated.” Prince, Power from on High, 132-33. It is fitting that he qualified his claim since the evidence he presents to sustain it, consisting of a brief summary of comments made by Hyrum Smith at the church’s 6 April 1842 General Conference, is weak. Times and Seasons 3 (15 April 1842): 763. These comments say only that missionaries would be required to receive “the same anointing” that was given to the elders in Kirtland so that they too could preach the gospel with power. The detailed outline of the Nauvoo temple rites in Doctrine and Covenants 124, dated 19 January 1841, absolutely obliterates Prince’s contention that no differences were anticipated for the LDS temple ceremony up through April 1842. Those who read Prince’s full argument will see that an apostolic epistle dated 15 November 1841 deals a blow to his theory: “God requires of his Saints to build Him a house wherein His servants may be instructed, and endowed with power from on high, to prepare them to go forth among the nations, and proclaim the fullness of the Gospel for the last time. . . . In this house all the ordinances will be manifest, and many things will be shown forth, which have been hid from generation to generation.” History of the Church, 4:449. A letter from Joseph Fielding, dated 28 December 1841 and printed in the Times and Seasons 3 (1 January 1842): 648-49, also indicates that the Saints anticipated receiving “the fullness of the priesthood” in the Nauvoo Temple. Ashment, in “The LDS Temple Ceremony,” 291 n. 10, advances a similar argument: “It is also significant that the original drawings of the Nauvoo temple did not include an area in which to perform the endowment ceremony, suggesting that no endowment ceremony was contemplated. Later drawings of the temple were altered to include a rectangular section in the attic story at the front where the endowment was to be performed.” This claim cannot be substantiated since anyone who has seen William Weeks’s Nauvoo Temple drawings knows that the first two drafts of the facade show a large semicircular window in the triangular pediment of the attic story, indicating that the space was to be used for some purpose. By the third drawing the triangular pediment of the temple was replaced by a rectangular front, and five small, semicircular windows had replaced the large single one; see Jay M. Todd, “Nauvoo Temple Restoration,” Improvement Era (October 1968): 15-16. If Ashment had checked one of the published drawings of the Nauvoo Temple attic, he would have seen that the rectangular area, consisting of inner and outer courts, was not used for the purpose of presenting the endowment ceremony.
In order to cover all the chronological bases, critics claim that Joseph Smith might have had an extensive knowledge of Masonic rituals long before he was even initiated as a Freemason. The problem with this claim is that it offers no hard evidence, only possibilities: Joseph Smith’s father and brother, who became Masons in the early 1800s, may have told him all about Freemasonry (p. 44); early converts who were Masons or anti-Masons might have provided him with detailed information (pp. 49–50); he could have read anti-Masonic exposés and become familiar with Masonic secrets. This theory does not offer one scrap of hard evidence that would support any of these suppositions. It is clear to me that Joseph Smith had a rudimentary understanding of Freemasonry before his initiation, otherwise he would have had no reason to join its ranks. But did he have a detailed knowledge of its secrets? The available evidence suggests that he did not. First, every Freemason swears an oath of nondisclosure, agreeing not to divulge the secrets of the society. A breach of this promise could bring about the punishment and expulsion of the violator. Besides the lack of a record of anyone’s being ejected from Masonry for prematurely revealing information to the Prophet, Franklin D. Richards said that “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

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43 Homer, “Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry,” 100. John Tvedtnes has pointed out in conversation with me that if Joseph Smith had somehow gained a detailed knowledge of Masonic rites prior to 1842 it would have been counterproductive for him to become a Freemason. He could have avoided casting suspicion on his reputation as a prophet by avoiding any Masonic affiliation and by making it appear as though the temple ceremony had simply come “out of the blue.” I would add that instead of taking this safe route the Prophet pursued the one path that was sure to bring the charge of plagiarism against him. I doubt that a deceiver would take such an obvious risk.

44 The founding minutes of the Nauvoo lodge clearly spell out this rule: “Should any member disclose to any person other than Ancient York Masons, in good standing, any of the proceedings or transactions of this lodge, improper to be made public, he shall be suspended, expelled, or otherwise dealt with, at the discretion of the lodge.” Hogan, The Founding Minutes of Nauvoo Lodge, 5. Heber C. Kimball, for one, said: “I have been true . . . to my Masonic brethren,” in Journal of Discourses, 9:182.
the lodge." This statement implies that the Prophet had no knowledge of Masonic secrets prior to his initiation.

Plenty of evidence, however, is available that Joseph Smith had a detailed knowledge of the Nauvoo temple ceremonies long before he introduced them in May 1842 and long before he set foot inside a Masonic hall. I have constructed a twenty-one-page timeline from historical sources that supports this conclusion. I cannot present all the evidence in this book review, but I would like to employ a small portion of it to address one of the recurring chronological fallacies put forward by Joseph Smith’s detractors.

While Joseph Smith was translating the book of Abraham from Egyptian papyri, he wrote a series of short explanations for three of the illustrations that accompanied his translation. The Prophet noted that in Facsimile 2, figures 3 and 7 were related in some manner to “the grand Key-words of the Holy Priesthood” and “the sign of the Holy Ghost.” When he came to figure 8, he explained that this area on the Egyptian drawing contained “writings that cannot be revealed unto the world; but is to be had in the Holy Temple of God.” Bürgers does not see how a literal translation of the Egyptian hieroglyphics in figure 8 can possibly have anything to do with the Nauvoo temple ceremony. He rejects the Prophet’s explanations and believes that Freemasonry is a more “reasonable” source of acquisition for Smith’s endowment elements (pp. 43–44).46

Other writers have used the Facsimile 2 material to sharpen the chronological argument against Joseph Smith. Facsimile 2 and its temple-related explanations were first printed in the 15 March 1842 edition of the Times and Seasons, the same day that the Prophet received the first of three Masonic initiation rites. Latter-day Saints have traditionally argued that this issue of the newspaper was published during the day while the Prophet’s Masonic

45 Larson, A Ministry of Meetings, 42.
initiation did not occur until that evening. Thus Joseph Smith must have had temple knowledge before he had Masonic knowledge. But critics point out that the 15 March issue of the paper was not actually published until 19 March, several days after the Prophet witnessed the Masonic ceremonies.\(^47\)

This is where terminology becomes crucial. Critics claim that the phrases employed by Joseph Smith in the Facsimile 2 explanations are Masonic and that it was not until several days after his Masonic induction that Joseph Smith "first spoke of 'certain key words and signs belonging to the priesthood.'\(^48\) These critics assume the terms are necessarily "Masonic," yet it must be remembered that Freemasonry's rites are little more than borrowed baggage.\(^49\) Then what about the supposedly incriminating timing


\(^48\) Prince, *Power from on High*, 135. The remarks that Prince refers to were made on 20 March 1842 and are recorded in *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:162: "certain key words and signs belonging to the priesthood which must be observed in order to obtain the blessings" (spelling and punctuation standardized). Buerger uses the same basic argument but employs a different quotation to make his point. He claims that after the Prophet had witnessed several Masonic initiation ceremonies he preached a sermon on 1 May 1842 that carried "Masonic overtones": "The keys are certain signs and words . . . which cannot be revealed . . . till the Temple is completed" (pp. 51–52). Ed Ashment argues that Joseph Smith either composed his Facsimile 2 explanations on the very day of his Masonic initiation or perhaps even sometime later, "resulting in the most importance of Facsimile 2." Ashment, "The LDS Temple Ceremony," 290–91.

\(^49\) Masonic passwords came straight from the Bible. A. C. F. Jackson, "Masonic Passwords: Their Development & Use in the Early 18th Century," *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 87 (1974): 106–7, 123, 125, 128, 130. Some of Masonry's ritual gestures were adopted from biblical texts. Eric Ward, "In the Beginning Was the Word . . ." *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 83 (1970): 309; see also Colin F. W. Dyer, *Symbolism in Craft Freemasonry* (London: Lewis Masonic, 1983), 49. It is the opinion of some historians that Masonry's ritual gestures were derived from a system of signs employed by medieval Christian monks. Mackey, *Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry*, 715. As far as the Masonic penalties are concerned, some "eminent brethren of the Fraternity insist that the penalty had its origin in the manner in which the lamb was sacrificed under the charge of the Captain of the Temple" in Jerusalem. Albert G. Mackey, *An Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Masonic History, 1925), 2:551; see also *The American Quarterly Review of Freemasonry* (New York: Robert Macy, 1859), 2:269. The Masonic handclaps, embrace, and transmittal of an esoteric word can be traced back to a story about Noah that is recorded in a docu-
of these incidents? This is precisely the point at which the entire argument falls apart. On 5 May 1841 William Appleby paid a visit to Joseph Smith, who read to him the revelation on temple ordinances, now identified as Doctrine and Covenants 124, that was received 19 January 1841. After the two men discussed baptism for the dead, the Prophet got out his collection of Egyptian papyrus scrolls and, while exhibiting Facsimile 2, explained to Appleby that part of the drawing was related to “the Lord revealing the Grand key words of the Holy Priesthood, to Adam in the garden of Eden, as also to Seth, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, and to all whom the Priesthood was revealed.” It is also clear from Doctrine and Covenants 124 that Joseph Smith was well aware of the main ritual elements of the Nauvoo endowment ceremony at least as early as 19 January 1841. This revelation lists the components of Nauvoo temple worship:

- baptism for the dead (D&C 124:39),
- washings (D&C 124:39),
- anointings (D&C 124:39),
- the keys of the Holy Priesthood (D&C 124:34, 95, 97),

...
memorials of Levitical sacrifices (D&C 124:39),
solemn assemblies (D&C 124:39),
oracles, conversations, statutes, and judgments (D&C 124:39),
ordinances that have been kept hidden (D&C 124:40–41),
and
the fulness of the priesthood (D&C 124:28)

Sometimes critics get so desperate to discredit Joseph Smith that they manufacture evidence in order to win their argument. In an attempt to demonstrate that the Prophet had extensive knowledge of Freemasonry at the earliest stages of the church, critics claim that the Book of Mormon contains Masonic language. In their minds the presence of such language constitutes proof that Joseph Smith not only knew Masonic terminology all along, but also that the Book of Mormon was composed by the Prophet and is not an authentic ancient document. Buerger refers his readers to several writings that support this theory, and he praises Dan Vogel’s article entitled “Mormonism’s ‘Anti-Masonic Bible’” as the “best study to date” (p. 47 n. 25). Buerger does not tell his readers that Daniel C. Peterson has published a detailed rebuttal of this theory. Peterson’s article and a follow-up piece were both

52 The specific wording used is “things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world” (D&C 124:41). Ashment and Prince interpret this phrase in ways that will support their respective arguments. Ashment takes it to mean “things that were never before known.” Ashment, “The LDS Temple Ceremony,” 291. Prince sees it in a similar manner: “A revelation dated 19 Jan. 1841 (DC, LDS, 124) speaks of ‘things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world’ (v. 41). Although this sounds similar to the statement concerning the 1842 endowment [in History of the Church, 5:2], the fact that it reaches farther back than Adam (‘before the foundation of the world’) and makes no mention of endowment suggests that it did not anticipate a newer version of the Kirtland endowment.” Prince, Power from on High, 138. Neither of these interpretations can be sustained. The History of the Church quotation referred to above makes it clear that the Nauvoo endowment was the institution of “the ancient order of things for the first time in these last days” History of the Church, 5:2, emphasis added. An epistle by the Twelve regarding the Nauvoo Temple also clarifies the context: “In this house all the ordinances will be made manifest, and many things will be shown forth, which have been hid from generation to generation.” History of the Church, 4:449, emphasis added. The endowment ordinances were also described in a church periodical as “those things hid up from the world.” Millennial Star 4 (October 1843): 83, emphasis added.
published long before *The Mysteries of Godliness* went to press, giving Buerger ample time to include them in his book to dem­onstrate his professed objectivity on this issue.53

*There was no endowment revelation.* Buerger feels justified in his belief that the temple endowment was derived from Free­masonry because Joseph Smith did not “leave a direct statement of how the endowment ceremony came to be” (p. 40). “On so important and central an ordinance,” he laments, “it is unfortu­nate there is no revelatory document nor any known contempo­rary reference to a revelation either by [Joseph] Smith or his asso­ciates” (p. 41).

Why didn’t the Prophet leave behind “a direct statement” on the endowment’s origins? Buerger answers this very question in one of his articles but fails to include the answer in his book: Joseph Smith was only able to finish his official history up through 1838. Had he lived longer it is entirely possible that he would have recorded such a statement.

Is there any contemporary reference to an endowment revela­tion by Joseph Smith or his associates? Yes, on 19 January 1841 Joseph Smith recorded a revelation wherein the Lord not only provided him with a detailed outline of the endowment ceremo­nies but also promised to show the Prophet “all things” pertain­ing to the Nauvoo Temple “and the priesthood thereof” (D&C 124:42). Only seven days after Joseph Smith administered the first Nauvoo endowments, John C. Bennett wrote in a letter that the Prophet had established an organization called “Order” (clearly the “Holy Order”) “by inspiration.” He said that there were

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“many curious things” associated with this group.⁵⁴ That same year Bennett published a book against the church in which he claimed that “Jo[seph Smith] pretends that God has revealed to him the real Master’s word which is . . . [part of the] ‘restoration of the ancient order of things.’”⁵⁵ In a near-contemporary record, which is related to this statement, William Clayton said of the Prophet, “He also spoke concerning key words. The g[rand] key word was the first word Adam spoke and is a word of supplication. He found the word by the Urinm and Thummim.”⁵⁶

Several later statements indicate that the endowment was restored through revelatory means. In 1845 Parley P. Pratt explained that Joseph Smith had given the Quorum of the Twelve “a pattern in all things pertaining to the sanctuary and the endowment therein” and cited the Prophet as saying that these things were “according to the heavenly vision, and the pattern shown me from heaven.”⁵⁷ On another occasion Pratt asked: “Who instructed [Joseph Smith] in the mysteries of the Kingdom, and in all things pertaining to Priesthood, law, philosophy, sacred architecture, ordinances, sealings, anointings, baptisms for the dead, and in the mysteries of the first, second, and third heavens, many of which are unlawful to utter? Angels and spirits from the eternal worlds.”⁵⁸ Elizabeth A. Whitney was convinced that an angel “committed these precious things into [the] keeping” of Joseph

⁵⁵ John C. Bennett, History of the Saints (Boston: Leland & Whitney, 1842), 275–76, emphasis added. Another anti-Mormon, John H. Beadle, said that “Joseph Smith out-Masoned Solomon himself and declared that God had revealed to him a great key-word, which had been lost, and that he would lead Masonry to far higher degrees, and not long after their charter was revoked by the Grand Lodge. . . . [T]he Mormons are pleased to have the outside world connect [the temple endowment and Masonic rites] and convey the impression that [the temple endowment] is Celestial Masonry.” John H. Beadle, The Mysteries of Mormonism (Philadelphia: National Publishing, 1878), 409. Freemasons are taught in their initiation ceremonies that certain elements of their ritual have been lost “and that certain substituted secrets were adopted ‘until time or circumstance should restore the former.’” Hamill, The Craft, 15–16.
⁵⁷ Millennial Star 5 (March 1845): 151, statement made 1 January 1845.
Smith. Eliza Munson likewise claimed that an angel showed Joseph Smith the pattern for the clothing that was to be worn during the endowment. Brigham Young's son indicated that his

59 Elizabeth A. Whitney, "A Leaf from an Autobiography," *Woman's Exponent* 7 (15 December 1878): 105. The theme of angelic delivery of endowment knowledge also shows up in early non-Mormon sources. One source says that the temple "ritual, it was explained, was revealed by an angel, and the Prophet only joined the lodge to see to what extent it had degenerated from its Solomonic purity." George B. Arbaugh, *Revelation in Mormonism: Its Character & Changing Forms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932), 160. Another source reports: "It is stoutly maintained that the priesthood is necessary to the being, as well as the perfection of a church... [W]e are informed [that the priesthood has] working signs, and that Masonry was originally of the church, and one of its favored institutions, to advance the members in their spiritual functions. It had become perverted from its designs, and was restored to its true work by Joseph [Smith], who gave again, by angelic assistance, the key-words of the several degrees that had been lost; and when he entered the lodges of Illinois, he could work right ahead of the most promoted; for which, through envy, the Nauvoo lodge was excommunicated." John W. Gunnison, *The Mormons, or Latter-day Saints, in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake* (Philadelphia: Lippincott & Grambo, 1852), 57, 59–60. Richard F. Burton, like Gunnison, said that the Saints "declare that... masonry is, like the Christian faith, founded upon truth, and originally of the eternal church, but fallen away and far gone in error." He likewise repeats the idea that an "angel of the Lord brought to Mr. Joseph Smith the lost key-words of several degrees." Burton, *The City of the Saints* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1862), 350–51.

60 "It was while they were living in Nauvoo that the Prophet came to my grandmother, who was a seamstress by trade, and told her that he had seen the angel Moroni with the garments on, and asked her to assist him in cutting out the garments"; cited in H. Donl Peterson, *Moroni: Ancient Prophet, Modern Messenger* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon, 1983), 165. Three historical items may lend credence to this report. First, the William Weeks architectural drawing for the Nauvoo Temple's weather vane depicts a horizontal angel dressed in temple clothing and holding a Book of Mormon. This angel is commonly thought to represent Moroni. Second, according to a report, in 1830 the angel Moroni appeared to Oliver Granger and prophesied: "A time will come when the Saints will wear garments made without seams." This is an obvious reference to the temple clothing of ancient Israel. Augusta J. Crocheron, *Representative Women of Deseret* (Salt Lake City: Graham, 1884), 24; see Exodus 28:31–32. And third, Esther Johnson, sister of Benjamin F. Johnson, related a story that is very similar to the one given above. "The Prophet called a meeting of the saints at Nauvoo and told them an angel had visited him and instructed him to have them wear the garments of the Holy Priesthood, a sample of which the angel showed him, explained all the features pertaining to it, and told him it must be worn all through life; and that it would be a protection to them against physical and spiritual
father taught "that after their arrival in Nauvoo the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith in a meeting held in the Prophet's brick store, the present endowment as subsequently administered in the Nauvoo Temple."\(^{61}\)

Some accounts concerning the origins of the endowment are tied directly to the subject of Freemasonry. For instance, Charles Charvatt, who knew the Prophet in Nauvoo, is reported to have said that "there were some signs and tokens with their meanings and significance which we [Freemasons] did not have. Joseph restored them and explained them to us."\(^ {62}\) And of course, this significant statement by Franklin D. Richards provides further explanation:

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 inquired of the Lord concerning the matter and He revealed to the Prophet true Masonry, as we have it in our temples. Owing to the superior knowledge Joseph received, the Masons became jealous and cut off the Mormon lodge.\(^ {63}\)

dangers if they were faithful to the covenants they made with the Lord. Accordingly Joseph had a garment made after the exact pattern the angel showed him, and took it to the meeting, held it up before the people and explained to them all that the angel told him to do. He then instructed them to go home and make their garments and begin to wear them." MS d 4057, fd 2, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

\(^{61}\) Letter of Brigham Young Jr. to George F. Richards, 18 July 1922, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

\(^{62}\) Manuscript of Samuel C. Young, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah. James Cummings, who was present during Joseph Smith's first Masonic initiation ritual, and was again in the lodge with the Prophet on at least one other occasion, is reported to have said that "the Prophet explained many things about the rites that even Masons do not pretend to understand but which he made most clear and beautiful." Horace H. Cummings, "True Stories from My Journal," Juvenile Instructor 64/8 (August 1929): 441.

\(^{63}\) Larson, A Ministry of Meetings, 42.
Altogether this evidence points to the conclusion that a divine revelation that restored the temple endowment ceremonies was indeed given to Joseph Smith. It should not be too surprising that a document recording this event has not surfaced, considering that Joseph Smith instructed Heber C. Kimball that these sacred rites were "not to be written."

**Conclusion**

*The Mysteries of Godliness* purports to be "a history of Mormon temple worship" and promises to treat its subject with reverence, show regard for the sensibilities of the faithful, provide adequate documentation, and be objective in its scholarship. In all these categories it comes up short. Readers are only provided with a partial, albeit interesting, set of historical documents with a minimal amount of commentary arranged in a manner that will support the author's contentions. Therefore its conclusions cannot be taken as the final word on this important subject.

Faithful Latter-day Saints will likely find this book offensive because of the direct assault it makes on the doctrinal teachings of the LDS Church and on the character of its founding prophet. They will probably wonder why members of their own faith would want to promote traditional anti-Mormon points of view among them. And perhaps they will be reminded of a prophecy uttered long ago that warned of wolves entering in among the flock (see Acts 20:29-30).