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DEVELOPING A HISTORICAL
CONSCIENCE: WILFORD WOODRUFF
AND THE PRESERVATION
OF CHURCH HISTORY

WHILE the Saints were at Winter Quarters in 1846, an important discussion ensued among the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Willard Richards, an apostle since 1840, believed his role as the church historian should take precedence over his other duties, even during the difficult and complex migration west. At stake was whether Richards was still to be funded for his labors by tithing during that trying period. Amid this debate, Wilford Woodruff, a member of the quorum for seven years and a diligent journal keeper, stood up and gave a passionate defense of the office and duty of the historian.

Elder W. Woodruff said, the subject alluded to by [Richards] was a benefit to the whole Church and kingdom of God. When he heard Joseph Smith preach he could not rest until he

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wrote it—[He] felt we were living in the most important era of the world, and the people ought to keep a strict eye upon the Historian—[He] felt deeply interested in the books out of which he was to be judged. He rejoiced that the Church had a ready writer and said he felt [Richards] should go to work and save the Church history.¹

Little did Woodruff know that in less than a decade he would be called as a church historian himself. In the April conference of 1856, he was assigned to the Church Historian's Office, where he would serve as either assistant church historian or church historian for more than three decades. While known for the voluminous journals he kept from 1834 until his death, Woodruff also contributed much to the history of the Latter-day Saints through his activities in these positions. Constant throughout his many years and historical projects was a burning desire to produce a "true and faithful record and history" for God, his ancestors, and his progeny.

This paper charts Woodruff's early experiences in dealing with church history, largely focusing on his historical outlook and early projects.

WOODRUFF AS HISTORIAN

No set of nineteenth-century journals is more important to the preservation of church history than Wilford Woodruff's. As Dean C. Jessee noted, "Beginning shortly after his conversion and continuing to his death in 1898, Wilford Woodruff's day books and journals, comprising thirty-one handwritten volumes, cover almost the entire span of the Church's nineteenth-century history."² B. H. Roberts, in his typical flowery language, did not hold back his praise for Woodruff's contribution:

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Other men may found hospitals or temples or schools for the church, or endow special divisions or chairs of learning in them; or they may make consecrations of lands and other property to the church, but in point of important service, and in placing the church under permanent obligations, no one will surpass in excellence and permanence or largeness the service which Wilford Woodruff has given to the Church of Jesus Christ in the New Dispensation, by writing and preserving the beautiful and splendid *Journals* he kept through sixty-three eventful years.³

Steven C. Harper went so far as to say, “Wilford Woodruff largely made the glasses through which we see the [Latter-day Saint] past.”⁴ Indeed, Woodruff’s journals document many of the most important events in early Mormon history, including the march of Zion’s Camp, the “Pentecostal experience” during the months following the Kirtland Temple dedication, and numerous sermons of church leaders.

While the importance of his journals cannot be overstated, many historians have overlooked his other contributions to the preservation of church history.⁵ Woodruff served as an assistant to three church historians (George A. Smith, Albert Carrington, and Orson Pratt) from 1856 to 1881, and then acted as church historian himself from 1881 until 1889. During those thirty-three years he accomplished many remarkable feats, including finishing the massive “History of Joseph Smith,” working on the often overlooked “History of Brigham Young,” compiling biographies for almost every individual called by Joseph Smith to be an apostle, and collecting numerous historical documents from many sources.

Woodruff began to love history as he came of age. Biographer Matthias Cowley wrote that though Woodruff hated to read as a child, he soon came to describe the act of reading as “most

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exaltant” and “most delightsome.” Before joining the church, he had already read “histories of the United States, England, Scotland, Greece, and Rome,” as well as the works of Josephus, which were popular during the period.⁶ Thus, he came into the church with the importance of historical work already planted in his mind.

Shortly after his baptism, he turned his attention to keeping a historical record of his own. He later recalled that he had “been inspired & moved upon to keep a Journal & write the affairs of this Church as far as I Can [remember].”⁷ Elsewhere he reflected on his early awareness of the importance of record keeping:

I seldom Ever heard the Prophet Joseph, or Brigham Young, or the Apostles teach preach or Prophesy or perform any official act but what I have recorded it in my Journals unless some other persons were recording the same and I Could not feel Easy untill I had accomplished it.

I have written more sacred History of the teaching of the prophets & Apostles & official acts of the Latter day Saints than would make several Testiments as large as the one Handed down to us by the Ancient Apostles. I have kept a Journal of almost Evry day of my life since I have been a member of this Church.⁸

Once he was in the Church Historian’s Office, he could acknowledge the significance of his previous record keeping. He felt proud to admit that “a great portion of the Church History has been Compiled from my Journals, & some of the most glorious Gospel Sermons truths & revelations that were given from God to this people . . . Could not be found upon the Earth on record ownly in my Journals.”⁹ Though he most likely understood the importance of his early journals when he wrote them, he gained

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added appreciation for them while working as a historian—particularly when dealing with events that were not as thoroughly documented as he would have liked.

A central tenet to Woodruff's historical conscience was his belief that keeping a faithful record was a spiritual obligation. When addressing a congregation in 1857, he stated that Joseph Smith had urged the brethren to keep a true record, and that he was just following counsel.¹⁰ Woodruff felt it was his duty "to keep a journal of my travels that when required I may give an account of my stewardship."¹¹ Record keeping was part of a collaborative effort with God: "Should we not have respe[c]t Enough to God," he once asked, "to make a record of those Blessings which He pours out upon us and Our official acts which we do in his name upon the face of the Earth?"¹²

While on his mission to Great Britain, Brigham Young remembered Woodruff for spending more time writing in his journal than helping the British Saints.¹³ Indeed, Woodruff believed that keeping a faithful history was required for membership in the kingdom of God.

PREPARATION AND APPOINTMENT TO THE CHURCH HISTORIAN'S OFFICE

A few years after settling in Utah, Wilford Woodruff was called as clerk and historian for the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—the first history-related position he held in Utah. In 1851 a meeting "moved & carried that the Record of the Twelve Apostles be put into the Hands of Wilford Woodruff to keep & record such acts as was necessary."¹⁴ Two years later, he exhorted his priesthood brethren "to keep a Journal & History of their lives for the record & history of this Church & Kingdom will be wanted in a future day. The[re] has been no dispensation on Earth the proceedings of

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which will be more interesting than the one in which we live.”¹⁵ In this position Woodruff helped George A. Smith, then church historian, reconstruct events of the past, especially when the facts could be determined by an appeal to his journals.¹⁶

When Smith was called on a mission to the East in 1856, church leaders found it necessary to appoint someone to pick up Smith’s historical work and continue various projects—particularly the completion of the time-consuming and vastly important “History of Joseph Smith.” An obvious replacement for the vacancy in the Historian’s Office was Smith’s former missionary companion and fellow apostle Wilford Woodruff. In Woodruff’s summary to the April 1856 conference, he wrote, “All of the Authorities of the Church were presented & received And W. Woodruff was Appointed Assistant Historian was to take charge . . . of the office during the absence of G. A. Smith.”¹⁷ His long career as official historian had finally commenced.

One of Woodruff’s earliest duties in this new position was to oversee the move into the recently built Historian’s Office that fall. As part of this task, he offered the dedicatory prayer for the new building—a prayer that revealed his belief in the sacredness of his calling:

By virtue of the Holy Priesthood vested in us, in the name of Jesus Christ, we do dedicate [the Historian’s Office] and consecrate it unto the Lord our God, and we set it apart that it may contain the holy records of the Church and kingdom of God, and we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that it may be sanctified and holy unto thy name and we pray that we may be inspired by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, while acting as Historians, or clerks for the Church; and may we keep a true and faithful record and history of thy Church and kingdom, and thy servants and may it be kept in that way

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and manner that it may be acceptable un[to] the[e] O Lord and unto thy servants the presidency of thy Church. . . .

And we ask thee to bless us and prosper us in all things, and we pray that thou wilt bring to our remembrance all things which are necessary to the writing of this history. And that papers and documents and all things necessary, may be brought to us, to enable us to compile a right, useful, and proper history.

. . . And bless those of thy servants who are among the nations of the earth and grant that they may be inspired to send an account of their works that we may be . . . enabled to keep a true and faithful record that when we have gone into the world of spirits that the saints of God may be blessed in reading our record which we have kept.¹⁸

As the prayer demonstrates, Woodruff felt that the keeping and writing of history was a task deserving of divine aid. Just a week earlier, he urged the Saints to keep a record, explaining that “we are living in one of the most important generations that man ever lived on Earth & we should write an account of those important transactions which are taking place before our Eyes in fulfillment of the prophecies & the revelation of God.”¹⁹

Woodruff once recorded in his journal a prayer that further reveals his belief in the sacred nature of his calling: “I Pray that the Lord will preserve me for a season that I may labour to assist in preserving & keeping a Record of this Church & kingdom & the dealings of God with us & preserve me O Lord from dishonouring my Calling or priesthood but give me faith power & grace to pass through whatever I may be Called to meet.”²⁰ That Woodruff associated failing at his calling with “dishonouring [his] . . . priesthood” shows how seriously he took his responsibilities.

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OUTLOOK ON HISTORY AND
IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL RECORDS

The “true and faithful record and history” Woodruff envisioned would need to be as comprehensive as possible. While imploring a fellow Saint to share what he remembered of an important moment in the Mormon past, he explained, “We feel that it is due Joseph Smith and the Church and Kingdom of God, and to all future generations that we embody every act and word in the History of the Last days of the Prophet.”²¹ Such a history required collaboration between appointed historians and other individuals who kept detailed, accurate records. In a sermon to the church in 1862, Woodruff taught:

You may say that Historians have handed [the history of nations, kingdoms, and countries] down unto us. But How have Historians obtained materials from which to Compile their History? I answer From the scribes, reporters, & Journalists who wrote day by day Events as they passed before the[ir] Eyes. And this Class of men forms the foundation of all History and from the[ir] Material, Historians who live hundreds of years after Events transpire will Compile History.²²

Thus, Woodruff relied heavily on eyewitness accounts. A major thrust of his role as historian was to encourage others to gain a historical conscience—to share his vision of the importance of personal historical records. Even before he was appointed as a historian, he asked the Saints in Bountiful, Utah, if they could “not Count [their experiences] worth recording? Not even make the mark of a pen to leave the Account on record for their children & future generations to read?” He continued, “I say they should. I think the Lord requires this at our hands & it is a Rich & Holy legacy which is Justly due our posterity.”²³

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In 1857, while admitting that some view history as “dry and uninteresting,” he pleaded with Church members to do their part and write their personal histories: “Evry man should writ a brief history of his life his parentage, His birth his religion when he was baptized & by whom when ordained what to & by whome give a brief sketch of all his missions & of all his offical acts & the dealings of God with him. Then if He was to die & the Historians wished to publish his history they would have sumthing to go by. Many may think this a dry subjet & unimportant but it is not so to me.”²⁴

Though a historical conscience typically focused on the past, Woodruff held that it also had an eye on the future. “If the[re] was no other motive in view ownly to have the privilege of reading over our Journals & for our Children to read,” he reasoned, “it would pay for the time spent in writing it.”²⁵ Woodruff felt the end result of keeping personal records would be a history that future generations, even those outside the church, would cherish.

DOCUMENTING JOSEPH SMITH’S MARTYRDOM

An example of Woodruff’s devotion to accurate history comes from his first few months in the Church Historian’s Office. After he was called at the April 1856 general conference, he was anxious to get started, writing within a couple of days that “I am about getting in[iti]ated into my office as assistant Historian.”²⁶ But the first few weeks were more difficult than he expected. First he came down with a crippling disease that kept him away from the office for several weeks; it was so severe that he couldn’t even leave his bed for quite some time. Finally, toward the end of May, he was able to put in his first full day of work. He wrote to George A. Smith, “I am now calculating to devote my time [to the history].”²⁷

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Before Woodruff's call, George A. Smith, Thomas Bullock, and others working in the Historian's Office had been diligent in "compiling the history of Joseph Smith from April 1st 1840 to his death on June 27th 1844."²⁸ In May 1856 the only task left to be completed was the account of the Prophet Joseph's last days in Carthage. This was challenging, however, because of incomplete records and historical gaps. On June 24 Woodruff noted in his journal that "we find a great Difficulty in writing the History of Joseph especially During the last few days of his life as no one kept a Journal of the same except Dr Richards wrote some but Died before the History was written out."²⁹ As a result of this problem, Woodruff was left to rely on eyewitnesses who were still living (and still in the church) to help fill in the gaps. Fortunately, he had been working with these eyewitnesses at various times during the previous decade and would continue to do so.

But the use of eyewitnesses introduced a challenge: conflicting accounts. Writing George A. Smith on June 30, Woodruff lamented:

We are still laboring upon that part of the History, and we almost daily get new statements from men who were directly or indirectly connected with the scenes of the last four days of the lives of the Prophet and Patriarch, and many of these accounts are in direct opposition to each other. We have the statements of John S. Fullmer, Dan Jones, S. Markham, W. W. Phelps, R. Cahoon, A. C. Hodge, O. P. Rockwell, Wm Clayton, D.B. Huntington and others in connection with D^r Richards Journal lying before us, and find they conflict a good deal.³⁰

In an attempt to solve this dilemma, Woodruff wrote the person he felt was the most reliable eyewitness to the events leading up to the martyrdom: John Taylor, who was then serving a mission on

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the East Coast. “We are very busy writing the history of the latter days of Joseph,” he wrote to Taylor, “and we have a great many conflicting statements on the subject, which renders it necessary for me to call in the aid of an eye and ear witness to enable me to do justice to it.” Woodruff then counseled Taylor to sit down with George A. Smith when he had time and “write out an account of all the circumstances relating to the subject which came under your immediate observation or experience” while in Carthage. Specifically, Woodruff wanted answers to certain questions ranging from whether it was Joseph or Hyrum who requested Taylor to sing “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief” the second time, to several questions regarding the handling of the dead bodies.³¹

Another challenge the new assistant church historian evidently experienced was the need to confront growing biases among the Utah Saints. For instance, many viewed Emma Smith, once a celebrated figure within the church, as having been unworthy and unable to follow the Lord’s counsel because of her rejection of polygamy and her refusal to move west.³² A decade earlier, William Clayton had written approvingly about her attempt to prepare a petition for the governor to release the men imprisoned at Carthage. Saints were now trying to make her appear sinister. One of John Taylor’s wives, for example, claimed that “Sister Hyrum Smith and herself got a man to draw up a petition to the Governor to restore those men in prison to their wives and children; this was signed by Sister Hyrum Smith; Sister Taylor . . . but when presented to Emma she utterly refused to sign it.” This account perpetuated the stereotype that Emma had grown increasingly distant from her polygamous husband. Woodruff was leery of this view and therefore wrote both Taylor and John Bernhisel, another witness to events leading up to the martyrdom, to try to get the facts straight.³³

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What stands out most from Woodruff's experience with the history is his determination to get even the smallest facts right. He clearly sought to "keep a true and faithful record and history of thy Church and kingdom," as he had pleaded in his dedicatory prayer.³⁴ He felt so confident about the accuracy of the history that he and George A. Smith penned the following postscript to their work:

The History of Joseph Smith is now before the world, and we are satisfied that a history more correct in its details than this was never published. To have it strictly correct, the greatest possible pains have been taken by the historians and clerks engaged in the work. They were eye and ear witnesses of nearly all the transactions recorded in this history, most of which were reported as they transpired, and, where they were not personally present, they have had access to those who were.

Smith and Woodruff closed with this bold claim: "We, therefore, hereby bear our testimony to all the world, unto whom these words shall come, that the History of Joseph Smith is true, and is one of the most authentic histories ever written."³⁵

While historical problems are present in the finished product, especially when measured against contemporary historical methods, the "History of Joseph Smith" is a monument to the dedication of Woodruff and others in creating a faithful, accurate history of the church. Compared with other historical works of the time, these Mormon historians did an exceptional job.³⁶

WRITING THE HISTORIES OF THE TWELVE

In 1856, as the writing of Joseph Smith's history was coming to a close, attention was turning to the next historical project. Those working in the Historian's Office decided to write a history

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of Brigham Young, which involved going back in chronology to cover his birth in 1801 through August 8, 1844, when the Twelve took on the leadership of the church.

Woodruff desired a detailed history of the entire Young family, not just Brigham. To Phineas Young, Brigham Young's brother, Woodruff wrote:

Will you favor us with a brief sketch of your life, for the church history in connexion with the Young family, name your religion before embracing mormonism, where & when you was baptized, and by whom. Your ordinations, offices, by whom, short synopsis of your missions, with the number baptized, your marriages & children &c. up to Augt. 8. 1844. We have an account of all the family but you, and shall be pleased to have yours by return of mail.³⁷

Woodruff also wanted to compile short biographies of every member of the Quorum of the Twelve prior to August 1844. His interest in this project probably stemmed from several factors. First, his role as secretary to the Twelve—a position he held since 1852—kept him interested in the history of the ecclesiastical body. Second, the work was a reflection of the growing importance of the quorum itself, especially where the manuscript dealt with the quorum's rise to authority during the Nauvoo years, which Woodruff had just finished writing about. And finally, the project was a testament to Woodruff's desire to compile a history that was as complete as possible.

At the beginning of February 1857, Woodruff began sending out requests to several quorum members:

Br. [Amasa] Lyman, the history of the church is now revised and corrected up to Augt. 8 1844 when Prest. Young and the Twelve become the Presidency of the church, at this period

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the history will commence, and give a brief account of the parentage, early life, missions and history of each of the Twelve. We would be pleased to have your history at your earliest convenience, say from 8 to 10 pages foolscap. Br. [Charles C.] Rich's history will come in at the date of his ordination and reception into the Quorum.³⁸

As he wrote these biographies, Woodruff received plenty of advice from his subjects—it must have been a relief to him after the troubles he had while writing about the last days of Joseph Smith's life. The Church Historian's Office Journal recorded many visits from several apostles who came to the office to review, revise, and correct their histories—most often Brigham Young, who seemed very concerned with how he and his brethren were portrayed in their histories. Luke Johnson, one of the original apostles who fell away but later returned, once spent an evening with Woodruff going over his history.³⁹ On another occasion, Brigham Young stayed “3+ hours in Compiling his History.”⁴⁰ In February, Heber C. Kimball had his history read to him and then remarked that “he did not think it full enough.”⁴¹ Clearly there were drawbacks to writing about those who had constant contact with the work.

Woodruff's concern for completeness compelled him to reach out to those who had fallen away from the church. Several weeks after he requested help from Amasa Lyman and Charles C. Rich, Woodruff noted in his journal that he “found great difficulty in obtaining any thing for the History of those who had apostitized.”⁴² For instance, Lyman Wight, an early confidant of Joseph Smith and a Nauvoo-era apostle, became disaffected with Brigham Young and eventually established his own schismatic Mormon settlement in Texas. Though the Utah church had no contact with the wayward Wight, Woodruff hoped to include him

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in the historical process. On the first day of July 1857, Woodruff wrote Wight:

I take the liberty of addressing a few lines to you for various reasons, one is for old acquaintance sake and another for the purpose of making a request of you, and upon the subject I will write first, it is this. During the last year I have been engaged in writing the History of the church and especially the History of the Twelve. I am taking up the Quorum from the commencement, have been trying to write your History but I cannot do justice to it at all without your assistance, and on the receipt of this I wish you would write a sketch of your life and forward it to me to this city, name your lineage or forefathers as far back as you can get, with anything you knew about them, and where you was from and when, what your religion was before you embraced the Gospel, where you was baptized and who by and all your ordinations, and by whom ordained—an outline of all your missions.

Woodruff also asked specific questions including whether Wight fought in the War of 1812 and what his recollections were concerning Liberty Jail.⁴³ Unfortunately, although Wight did send some form of a history, it arrived too late. In June of the following year, 1858, Woodruff wrote him again, explaining that the Utah War had caused “almost universal destruction of all our mail matter” and delayed the delivery of Wight’s response. He apologized and told Wight where to find what was published.⁴⁴

These biographies were eventually compiled in books F and G of the Manuscript History of the Church and were published in the *Deseret News* and *Millennial Star*.⁴⁵ Woodruff was extremely relieved when the project was finished, writing in his

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journal that he was “vary thankful that we in a measure are getting through with the History of the Twelve for it has Cost me nearly a years hard brain labor.”⁴⁶ The project stands as a testament to Woodruff’s unflinching desire to fulfill his duties. Historian Howard Searle asserted that together the biographies constituted one of Woodruff’s two most significant contributions to Mormon history, the other being his journals.⁴⁷

CONCLUSION

Wilford Woodruff’s contributions to the church’s history were not lost on his contemporaries. George A. Smith, after enjoying the apostle’s assistance in the Historian’s Office for four years, claimed that Woodruff “had done more to preserve the History of this Church than any man on the Earth.”⁴⁸ Eliza R. Snow expressed similar sentiments in a poem she presented to Woodruff in 1857:

With heart inspired rich matter to indite
In Zion now your business is to write.
With skill you wield the ready writer’s pen.
Tis yours to immortalize the deeds of men.

Full many a righteous act and gifted word
By saints performed—from lips of Prophets heard
Had sliped mem’ries of Judicious men
But for the promptings of your faithful pen.

The Church Historians labours to divide
As his assistant coupled side by side
You write for Zion whare her Hist’ry known
Inscribing hers perpetuates your own.⁴⁹

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Woodruff believed his historical conscience was a fulfillment of his spiritual promises. He urged the Saints to keep better records, and he strove to consult all available accounts when preparing a “true and faithful record and history” for the entire church. He stressed over minute facts, believing that “every act and word” of the history needed to be recorded. As a result of his dedication, he left behind a body of work that was important in his time and that is priceless today.

NOTES

1. Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, December 17, 1846, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. The historical record is silent on the other side of the debate, likely because the narrative comes from Richards’s own account. See Willard Richards, Journal, December 17, 1846, Willard Richards Papers, Church History Library.
2. Dean C. Jessee, “Wilford Woodruff: A Man of Record,” *Ensign*, July 1993, 29.
3. B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 6:355; emphasis in original.
4. Steven C. Harper, “A True and Faithful Record: Wilford Woodruff as Journal Keeper,” paper presented at the BYU Church History Symposium, October 12, 2007, copy in author’s possession.
5. Howard Searle’s excellent dissertation on early Mormon historiography probably gives the most attention to Woodruff’s labors as a historian, though it is necessarily limited since his purpose was to describe all historical activities within the first three decades of the church. Howard Clair Searle, “Early Mormon Historiography: Writing the History of the Mormons 1830–1858” (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1979). Thomas Alexander’s otherwise outstanding biography mentions few of Woodruff’s activities in this capacity. Thomas G. Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth: The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, a Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991).

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6. Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909), 25.
7. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:36, March 17, 1857. All quotations from Woodruff's journals come from *Wilford Woodruff's Journal: 1833–1898, Typescript*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983–85). The original journals are located at the Church History Library.
8. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 6:23–24, February 12, 1862.
9. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:37, March 17, 1857.
10. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:35, March 17, 1857.
11. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 1:3, undated.
12. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 6:24, February 12, 1862.
13. Brigham Young, sermon, April 6, 1857, in *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4 (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1857), 305.
14. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 4:10, February 3, 1851.
15. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 4:200, February 15, 1853.
16. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 4:261, April 20, 1854.
17. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 4:409, April 7, 1856.
18. *Journal History*, September 15, 1856.
19. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 4:444, September 6, 1856.
20. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:86, August 28, 1857.
21. Woodruff to John Bernhisel, June 30, 1856, Church Historian's Office Letterpress Copybook, 1:325, Church History Library; emphasis added. Unless otherwise identified, all letters come from this copybook.
22. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 6:19, February 12, 1862.
23. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 4:358, November 18, 1855.
24. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:34, 38, March 17, 1857.
25. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 4:444–45, September 6, 1856.
26. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 4:410, April 15, 1856.
27. Woodruff to Smith, May 28, 1856, 1:299.
28. George A. Smith to Wilford Woodruff, April 21, 1856, Historical Record Book, 1843–1874, p. 218, Church History Library.
29. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 4:424, June 24, 1856. In a letter to John Bernhisel, Woodruff wrote that “this period of Joseph's History is the most difficult to make out as Dr Richards wrote but little, and that in detached sentences, expecting to make it out himself, but died before doing it.” Woodruff to Bernhisel, June 30, 1856, 1:325–26.

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30. Woodruff to Smith, June 30, 1856, 1:323.
31. Woodruff to Taylor, June 30, 1856, 1:315–20. According to the final history, which relied on John Taylor’s response, it was Hyrum who asked Taylor to repeat the hymn. *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 7:101. See also B. H. Roberts, *The Life of John Taylor: Third President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons, 1892), 135–37. Interestingly, Woodruff also asked Taylor about an event Dan Jones claimed happened the night before the martyrdom: Jones had said: “We were awoke [during the night of the 26th] by heavy treads as of soldiers close by, and heard a whispering under the window ‘who shall go in? how many shall go in? &c. they came up stairs to the prison door against which we had taken the precaution to place a chair; hearing us speaking to each other they hesitated, when Joseph called out, ‘come on you assassins! we are ready for you and would as willingly die now as at daylight!’ Hearing this they returned again.” It appears that John Taylor must not have corroborated this detail, since it did not appear in the final history.
32. “Emma Smith is one of the damnest liars I know of on this earth,” declared Brigham Young in 1866. Address, October 7, 1866, Brigham Young Papers, Church History Library, quoted in Valeen Tippetts Avery and Linda King Newell, “The Lion and the Lady: Brigham Young and Emma Smith,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 48 (Winter 1980): 82. For the Utah church’s assumptions concerning Emma, see Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 260, 270, 292.
33. Wilford Woodruff to John Bernhisel, June 30, 1856, 1:325; Woodruff to Taylor, June 30, 1856, 1:315–20. Woodruff ended up not mentioning the petition in the final history, likely due to a lack of corroborating evidence. No contemporary accounts speak of Emma signing such a petition.
34. Journal History, September 15, 1856.
35. *History of the Church*, 7:242–43.
36. See Dean C. Jessee, “The Reliability of Joseph Smith’s History,” *Journal of Mormon History* 3 (1976): 23–46. Most criticisms of the history relate to controversial matters that are not addressed in the work.
37. Woodruff to Young, February 28, 1857, 1:434. Elsewhere, Woodruff gave further details concerning the history of Young’s family: “Please also tell

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- br. Phinehas [Young] that we want a brief sketch of his life as we are compiling a short sketch of each one of the Brothers and sisters of bro. Brigham, their families, their missions, and important events in their lives, all these sketches will be required from your birth till Augt. 8, 1844, when the history of the church becomes the history of Br. Brigham, and takes all his brethren from that date along daily as Joseph's history did." Wilford Woodruff to Orson Pratt, February 28, 1857, 1:433.
38. Woodruff to Amasa Lyman and Charles C. Rich, February 28, 1857, 1:430–31; see also *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:28, on the same date.
 39. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:40, March 20, 1857.
 40. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:84, August 26, 1857.
 41. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:26, February 23, 1857.
 42. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:34, March 17, 1857.
 43. Woodruff to Wight, July 1, 1857, 1:467.
 44. Woodruff to Wight, June 30, 1858, 1:536. The author has not been able to find Wight's response and corresponding history. Woodruff noted that it was "dated Mountain Valley Aug. 4 '57." However, it appears that Wight wrote a long, perhaps polemical history to support his schismatic claims, for it garnered a spirited response from Woodruff, George A. Smith, Amasa Lyman, Charles C. Rich, and two of Wight's nephews who defended Young's claim to authority.
 45. Searle, "Early Mormon Historiography," 141. Searle includes useful graphs detailing who wrote which histories (341–42) and where they were published (344–45).
 46. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:177, March 20, 1858.
 47. Searle, "Early Mormon Historiography," 141.
 48. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:484, August 21, 1860.
 49. Eliza R. Snow, "To Elder Wilford Woodruff," November 23, 1857, in *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:138–39, December 16, 1857.