



*Wilford Woodruff four-generation photograph, August 16, 1897, just five months after recording his voice testimony about events in Nauvoo between 1842 and 1844. (Photograph by Charles Johnson, courtesy of Church History Library.)*



WILFORD WOODRUFF'S  
1897 TESTIMONY

**H**ISTORIANS are necessarily bound by sources when they attempt to reconstruct the past. Contemporary diaries, letters, minutes, and public documents provide important material to do so; however, scholars are challenged when such sources are fragmentary. In these instances, historians often turn to non-traditional material. Reminiscences, or first-person eyewitness accounts recounted years later, often help fill the gaps and reveal more of the story.<sup>1</sup>

Scholars have noted that there are numerous good reasons for trusting a witness. For example, Richard Bauckham argues, “Trusting testimony is not an irrational act of faith that leaves critical rationality aside; it is, on the contrary, the rationally appropriate way of responding to authentic testimony.” He adds,

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*Richard Neitzel Holzappel is a professor of Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University. Stephen H. Smoot is a businessman and researcher into the doctrinal development of the Restoration.*

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“We need to recognize that, historically speaking, testimony is a unique and uniquely valuable means of access to historical reality.”<sup>2</sup>

Wilford Woodruff was an eyewitness to key events in Nauvoo between 1842 and 1844, including the last meeting the Prophet Joseph Smith held with members of the Twelve Apostles in the spring of 1844 before the Apostles left for the East.<sup>3</sup> This important gathering, known as the “Last Charge” meeting, was a particularly significant and far-reaching event for which no contemporary minutes have been discovered. Woodruff’s numerous



*William W. Major’s painting, depicting a meeting with members of the Twelve in Nauvoo. In a similar setting the Prophet gathered the Twelve together to give his last charge and, according to Wilford Woodruff, “spent many days with us in giving us our endowments, and teaching us those glorious principles which God had revealed to him.” (Courtesy of Church History Museum.)*

*Wilford Woodruff's 1897 Testimony*

reminiscences of that auspicious day in Nauvoo can help reconstruct not only the event but also its significance.

The “Last Charge” meeting was held on March 26, 1844. Woodruff’s brief note in his diary states only, “March 26, 1844. A rainy day. I met in council with the brethren.”<sup>4</sup> Naturally, scholars wonder why Woodruff’s diary entry was so brief for what he later considered one of the most important days of his life, especially in light of the fact that he was a prodigious diarist. Other participants were just as circumspect. For example, William Clayton noted, “In Council through the day.”<sup>5</sup> The Prophet’s own diary states, “Tuesday, March 26 1844 From 9 to 12 in council. From 2 to 5 P.M. in council. Warm, some wet.”<sup>6</sup>

Because it was considered sacred and confidential, participants chose not to reveal or divulge what transpired in the meeting. As with prior meetings held in the spring of 1844, those participating knew that details were strictly not to be disclosed. Joseph Smith’s diary notes that the participants in these special meetings, beginning on March 10, 1844, took an oath of confidentiality regarding these matters: “Joseph required perfect secrecy of them.”<sup>7</sup> Later, one participant disclosed to a reporter, “For the time being, this was to remain a perfect secret until God should reveal to the contrary,” and Joseph Smith “swore them all to present secrecy, under the penalty of death!”<sup>8</sup>

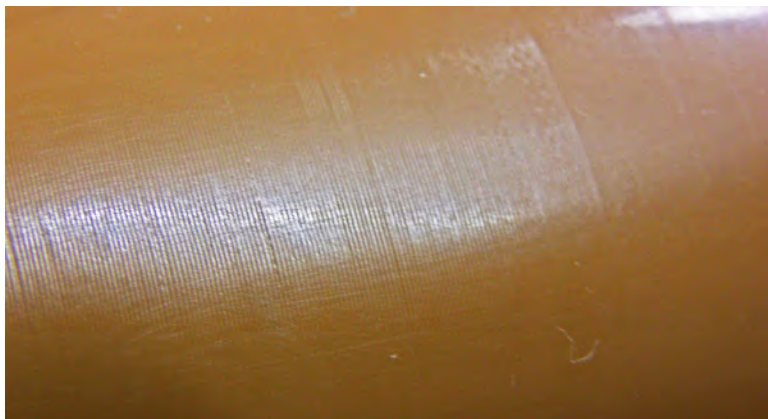
Only later, as a result of the succession crisis, when questions arose about Joseph Smith’s intentions, did Wilford Woodruff begin to talk about the salient points of the “Last Charge” meeting. On a number of occasions, both in talks and in print from 1844 until just before his death in 1898, he spoke of this pivotal event. While accounts on different occasions elicited varying details, there emerges from a reading of all these recollections a core

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story, a clear and consistent picture of the main elements of this event and its significance.

On March 12 and 19, 1897, Wilford Woodruff preserved his audible testimony of this event on wax cylinders, becoming the first prophet in history to record his voice.<sup>9</sup> Among all the events of his life from which he could have selected for posterity, it is significant that he chose to testify of the Prophet's "Last Charge" to the Twelve. The recording was based on a carefully prepared written text which he read as the phonograph stylus engraved the outside surface of the wax cylinders to preserve his voice.

In late 1877, while attempting to improve the telegraph transmitter, Thomas Edison discovered the process to record and reproduce sound, calling his invention the phonograph. It allowed sound vibrations generated by speaking into the mouthpiece to be engraved into a cylinder by a recording needle. Two decades later, Joseph J. Daynes Jr., Wilford Woodruff's son-in-law and



*A close-up look at the grooves in one of the brown wax Edison recording cylinders that recorded the testimony of Wilford Woodruff soon after his ninetieth birthday. The photographed cylinders are archived at the Church History Library in Salt Lake City. (Photograph by Michael De Groot, Deseret News, March 3, 2010.)*

*Wilford Woodruff's 1897 Testimony*

president of Daynes Music in Salt Lake City, took a phonograph to the President's office on March 12, 1897, "for the purpose of showing its workings, and to get Pres. Woodruff to talk into it." He "spoke into the phonograph, which afterwards repeated back quite audibly and satisfactorily [to] all of the First Presidency."<sup>10</sup> Woodruff had just turned ninety years old on March 1, so this was a particularly significant opportunity near the end of his life.

Two weeks later, on March 19, "Pres. Wilford Woodruff spoke again into the graphophone, or phonograph, the same words which he uttered into the instrument on March 12th. They were repeated in order to obtain better results than were secured on that date. After reading his testimony as recorded on the 12th inst., he signed it with his own hand, that it might go on record."<sup>11</sup>

Truman G. Madsen captured the importance of this momentous event: "Notes are often misplaced and forgotten. But this recording preserves indelible firsthand experience. With transparent clarity, he blends Joseph's words with his own. This, Joseph's last testimony to the Twelve, became his own."<sup>12</sup> An audible statement can leave lasting impressions upon the listener by capturing emotion and emphasis undetectable in written form.

THE WAX CYLINDERS

The recording is preserved on wax cylinders located in the Church History Library in Salt Lake City. No work has been done on the actual cylinders since 1968, and another attempt to capture the recordings is planned in the near future when technology that will not destroy them is identified.

Michael De Groote, a reporter at the *Deseret News*, recently completed research into the history of the three cylinders found in the Church History Library. His research suggests that the

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March 12 recordings have not survived.<sup>13</sup> He also discovered that each cylinder held only two minutes of recording time. Therefore, the carefully worded four-minute testimony required two cylinders. De Groot summarized how the testimony was transferred from the cylinders:

Christine R. Marin, an information specialist archivist at the Church History Library, said that in 1968, the cylinders were taken to Recording Arts in Salt Lake City to have the testimony transferred onto tape. The electronic media department at BYU also tried to make a more complete transfer.

The results weren't satisfactory, so the cylinders were taken to Walter L. Welch at Syracuse University in New York. Welch



*Three Edison phonograph recording cylinders used to record President Wilford Woodruff's testimony on March 19, 1897. (Photograph by Michael De Groot, Deseret News.)*

*Wilford Woodruff's 1897 Testimony*



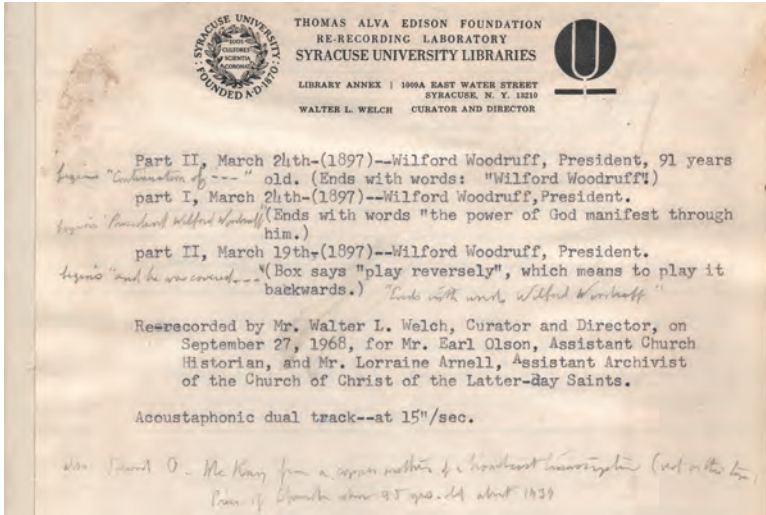
*Christine R. Marin, an information specialist archivist at the Church History Library, holds one of three phonographic cylinders containing the recorded testimony of President Wilford Woodruff. (Photograph by Michael De Groot, Deseret News.)*



*Christine R. Marin wraps one of three phonographic cylinders in its original cotton batten. (Photograph by Michael De Groot, Deseret News.)*



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*In September of 1968, the cylinders were taken to the Thomas Alva Edison Re-recording Laboratory at Syracuse University, where President Woodruff's testimony was transferred to tape. (Courtesy of Syracuse University Libraries, Syracuse, New York.)*

was able to make a tape that was, according to one account, “more than 60 percent intelligible.”

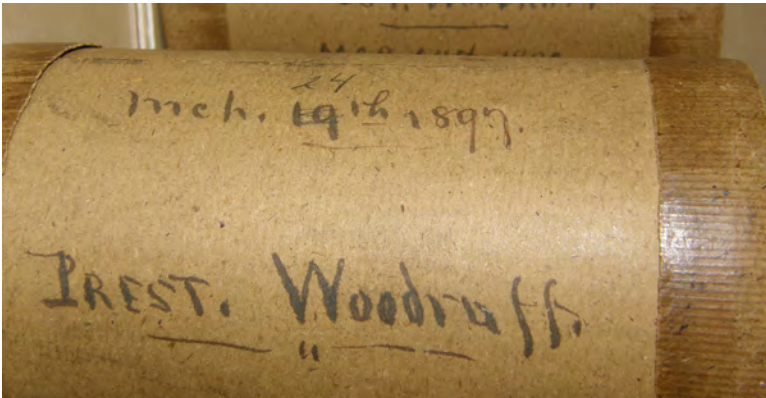
In January 1972, a flexible plastic record was bound within the church's New Era youth magazine. That record included a small portion of President Woodruff's testimony, along with recordings of several other prophets. The prophet's voice was heard again, but only partially.<sup>14</sup>

Welch was the director of the Thomas Alva Edison Foundation Re-Recording Laboratory at the Syracuse University Libraries. He completed the transfer on September 27, 1968.<sup>15</sup> He noted that “Part I,” or cylinder one, ended with the words “The power of God manifested through him.” He also noted that “Part II,” or

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*The January 1972 issue of the Church's New Era magazine included a flexible plastic record that had voices of several Mormon prophets, including excerpts from the testimony of President Wilford Woodruff. (Photograph by Michael De Groot, Deseret News.)*



*The "19" in March 19, 1897, is crossed out and replaced with "24." This is likely a copy of the recording made by President Wilford Woodruff on March 19, 1897. (Photograph by Michael De Groot, Deseret News.)*

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*Cylinder 2, recorded on March 12, 1897, is likely a copy of the original recording made that same day by President Wilford Woodruff. (Photograph by Michael De Groot, Deseret News.)*

cylinder two, ended with “Wilford Woodruff.” For some reason, someone incorrectly wrote “March 24th” on these first two cylinders. The third cylinder, also identified as “Part II,” was correctly labeled “March 19th.”<sup>16</sup>

### WILFORD WOODRUFF’S 1897 TESTIMONY

This 1897 testimony, both the written and audio versions, provides a window into Wilford Woodruff’s understanding of Joseph Smith’s legacy and the significance of some of the key events between 1842 and 1844. Wilford Woodruff’s 1897 account was among the last recitals of the last living apostolic eyewitness of these crucial events.

Wilford Woodruff painstakingly prepared the words he wanted to preserve about what he considered a crucial part of Joseph Smith’s legacy for an unborn generation of Latter-day

*Wilford Woodruff's 1897 Testimony*

Saints. These written words preserve the core information from his multiple testimonies on the subject and highlight exactly what he wanted people to remember most about the Prophet Joseph Smith's ministry and legacy in Nauvoo. He recorded:

I bear my testimony that the Prophet Joseph Smith said, before a large assemblage in Illinois, that if he were the emperor of the world and had control over the whole human family he would sustain every man, woman and child in the enjoyment of their religion. These are my sentiments today.

I bear my testimony that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, ordained of God to lay the foundation of his church and kingdom in the last dispensation of the fulness of times.

I bear my testimony that in the early spring of 1844, in Nauvoo, the Prophet Joseph Smith called the Twelve Apostles together and he delivered unto them the ordinances of the Church and kingdom of God; and all the keys and powers that God had bestowed upon him, he sealed upon our heads, and he told us that we must round up our shoulders and bear off this kingdom, or we would be damned. I am the only man now living in the flesh who heard that testimony from his mouth, and I know that it was true by the power of God manifest to him. At that meeting he stood on his feet for about three hours and taught us the things of the kingdom. His face was as clear as amber, and he was covered with a power that I had never seen in any man in the flesh before.

I bear testimony that Joseph Smith was the author of the endowments as received by the Latter-day Saints. I received my own endowments under his hands and direction, and I know they are true principles. I not only received my own endowments under his hands, but I bear my testimony that

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copy  
116.11  
Friday, March, 19th, 1897.

Presidents Woodruff and Cannon at the office.

President Woodruff again spoke into the graphophone or talking machine, repeating what he said on the 12th inst., as recorded in this Journal. The object of the repetition was to obtain, if possible, better results than were obtained on the previous occasion. In order to procure President Woodruff's signature to the testimony he bears, it is herewith repeated and signed by himself:

"I bear my testimony that the Prophet Joseph Smith said, before a large assemblage in Illinois, that if he were the emperor of the world and had control over the whole human family he would sustain every man, woman and child in the enjoyment of their religion. These are my sentiments today.

I bear my testimony that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, ordained of God to lay the foundation of his church and kingdom in the last dispensation of the fulness of times.

I bear my testimony that in the early spring of 1844, in Nauvoo, the Prophet Joseph Smith called the Twelve Apostles together and he delivered unto them the ordinances of the Church and kingdom of God; and all the keys and powers that God had bestowed upon him, he sealed upon our heads, and he told us that we must round up our shoulders and bear off this kingdom, or we would be damned. I am the only man now living in the flesh who heard that testimony from his mouth, and I know that it was true by the power of God manifest to him. At that meeting he stood on his feet for about three hours and taught us the things of the kingdom. His face was as clear as amber, and he was covered with a power that I had never seen in any man in the flesh before.

I bear testimony that Joseph Smith was the author of the endowments as received by the Latter-day Saints. I received my own endowments under his hands and direction, and I know they are true principles. I not only received my own endowments under his hands, but I bear my testimony that Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, George A. Smith, John Taylor and other brethren received their endowments under the hands and direction of the Prophet Joseph; and also my wife Phebe, Bathsheba Smith, Leonora Taylor, Mary Smith and others whose names I cannot recall now.

The Prophet Joseph laid down his life for the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ, and he will be crowned as a martyr in the presence of God and the Lamb.

In all his testimonies to us the power of God was visibly manifest with the Prophet Joseph.

This is my testimony, spoken by myself into a talking machine on this the 19th day of March, 1897, in the 91st year of my age."

WILFORD WOODRUFF.

*A transcription of Wilford Woodruff's testimony, recorded on March 19, 1897. (Courtesy of Church History Library.)*

*Wilford Woodruff's 1897 Testimony*

Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, George A. Smith, John Taylor and other brethren received their endowments under the hands and direction of the Prophet Joseph; and also my wife Phoebe, Bathsheba Smith, Leonora Taylor, Mary Smith and others whose names I cannot recall now.

The Prophet Joseph laid down his life for the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ, and he will be crowned as a martyr in the presence of God and the Lamb.

In all his testimonies to us the power of God was visibly manifest with the Prophet Joseph.

This is my testimony, spoken by myself into a talking machine on this the 19th day of March, 1897, in the 91st year of my age.

Wilford Woodruff.<sup>17</sup>

Certainly, the historical context of Wilford Woodruff's day helped shaped what he said as he responded to current questions and issues that faced the Latter-day Saints during his lifetime. For example, Woodruff once addressed the Salt Lake Temple workers during their evening testimony meeting and said that various individuals and groups claimed that "Brigham Young organized the endowments and originated the principle of plural marriage." He knew otherwise and testified, "They're liars, every one of them, and the truth is not in them; in so far as this matter is concerned."<sup>18</sup> In a theological battle over Joseph Smith's legacy, Wilford Woodruff felt compelled to tell what he had seen, heard, and experienced as an eyewitness in Nauvoo. On the same occasion he also said, "There's Sister Bathsheba Smith, she and I both had our endowments under the hands of the Prophet Joseph Smith. I had my second anointings and sealings under his hands.

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There is not a single principle in this Church that he did not lay the foundation for; he called the Twelve together the last time he spoke to us, and his face shone like amber.”<sup>19</sup>

What is striking about Wilford Woodruff’s numerous reminiscences about the important events in Nauvoo, beginning with his first public statement on the subject on October 12, 1844,<sup>20</sup> and his final testimony on the “Last Charge,” given on May 31, 1898, less than four months before his death, is the emergence of a core story. These accounts repeat similar ideas and in some case certain phrases word for word over a period of five decades.<sup>21</sup> Time and time again for fifty-four years, he returned to the same events in Nauvoo, especially the “Last Charge.” He remarked in 1889 that he had “alluded to that meeting many times.”<sup>22</sup> Each event was an opportunity to recall what he remembered. This combined collection of reminiscences does not reveal layers of tradition built upon earlier tellings of the story that have to be peeled back like an onion to get to the original core; instead, the collection reveals the existence of a consistent and stable story repeated for over fifty years.

The significance of the events Wilford Woodruff mentioned in his 1897 testimony became apparent following the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith on June 27, 1844, only three months after the “Last Charge.” Following the Martyrdom, questions about succession and what ordinances and institutions had been revealed through and established by Joseph Smith in Nauvoo were debated and argued by a number of individuals and organizations that challenged the authority of the Twelve to lead the Church.

Wilford Woodruff was acutely aware of his role as witness and the significance of what he experienced. In June 1889, he told a conference of the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association, “All that President Young or myself, or any member of the

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Quorum need have done in the matter was to have referred to the last instructions at the last meeting we had with the Prophet Joseph before starting on our mission.”<sup>23</sup>

WILFORD WOODRUFF AS AN EYEWITNESS

Wilford Woodruff provides both his memory of key events in the history of the Restoration at a critical period in the 1840s and his interpretation of those events as he understood them. Not all historians or observers will agree with Woodruff's interpretation of the events he preserved in this remarkable recording and written document. However, some of the facts noted in the 1897 testimony are irrefutable. There can be no dispute about the broad historical context painted by Wilford Woodruff in his reminiscence. For example, there is universal agreement that Joseph Smith spoke to large congregations in Illinois on several occasions between 1839 and 1844.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, historians have known for some time that in 1844 the Prophet established the political kingdom of God that would rule under Christ during the Millennium.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, there is general consensus that Joseph Smith established temple worship when he introduced the ordinances of washing, anointing, and washing of feet in Kirtland in 1836. Finally, they also recognize that the Prophet expanded temple worship in Nauvoo beginning on May 4, 1842, when nine men received their endowment from him.<sup>26</sup>

Joseph Smith met with the Twelve Apostles in Nauvoo on numerous occasions during a time that witnessed their increasing prominence as a quorum in the affairs of the Church. In his 1897 testimony, Wilford Woodruff mentions a pivotal meeting in the spring of 1844 that established the authority of the Twelve. Because no contemporary minutes of this meeting have been discovered,



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historians have been forced to rely on other sources, particularly oral and written reminiscences of the eyewitnesses involved. Because of this, Wilford Woodruff's 1897 testimony is invaluable.

### ANALYSIS OF WILFORD WOODRUFF'S 1897 TESTIMONY

*Statement 1: "I bear my testimony that the Prophet Joseph Smith said, before a large assemblage in Illinois, that if he were the emperor of the world and had control over the whole human family he would sustain every man, woman and child in the enjoyment of their religion. These are my sentiments today."*

Joseph Smith spoke in public and private on numerous occasions in Nauvoo, and because he prepared only a few discourses in advance, virtually all of his teachings from Nauvoo are summaries or extracts of those sermons, never the complete record of what he said.<sup>27</sup>

In this first statement Wilford Woodruff recalls a public meeting in Illinois where the Prophet spoke. A careful search of the Prophet's sermons in Nauvoo has failed to identify what occasion Woodruff was actually referring to, but just two weeks before his death on September 2, 1898, Wilford Woodruff again recalled this Nauvoo talk, as Charles W. Walker noted on August 20, 1898: "Among other things said by Br Woodruff, while staying at Col Trumbo's, was that during the past year there had never been so many added to the church since its organization. He said also that he had heard the Prophet Joseph Smith say many times that if he, Joseph, were the Emperor of the whole world, he would let every man, woman, and child worship God as they pleased and would protect them in the free exercise of their religion."<sup>28</sup>

*Wilford Woodruff's 1897 Testimony*

President Woodruff's next sentence pertains to laying the foundation of the earthly kingdom of God in the last dispensation. In 1882, John Taylor received a revelation stipulating that one of the purposes of the kingdom was the "promulgation and protection of civil and religious liberty in this nation and throughout the world; And all men of every nation, color and creed shall yet be protected and shielded thereby."<sup>29</sup>

Although surviving accounts from Nauvoo do not preserve Wilford Woodruff's precise terminology, the sentiments are well attested. The Prophet Joseph Smith said on several occasions, beginning with the forced exodus of the Saints from Missouri, that if he were ever in a position to do so, he would do everything in his power to assure the protection of civil and religious liberty for all, even to the point of giving his life if necessary.

*Statement 2: "I bear my testimony that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, ordained of God to lay the foundation of his church and kingdom in the last dispensation of the fulness of times."*

Although the terms "church" and "kingdom" are often used synonymously by members today, it is essential to understand their use in the 1840s in order to appreciate the Prophet's teachings on the subject and to understand Wilford Woodruff's 1897 testimony.

In July 1842, the Prophet wrote an editorial titled "The Government of God" in the *Times and Seasons*.<sup>30</sup> In the editorial he declared that the governments of men "have failed in all their attempts to promote eternal power, peace and happiness. . . . [Even] our nation, which possesses greater resources than any other, is rent, from center to circumference, with party strife, political intrigues, and sectional interest."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, he believed that the Lord had a hand in founding the government of the United States and that he raised up wise men to prepare the Constitution

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(see D&C 101:88). But even this government had failed to provide the protection and prosperity that God intended for human happiness in the promised land, especially among the large American slave population, native peoples, and religious minorities.

Speaking of ancient Israel, Joseph Smith taught that “their government was a theocracy,” adding, “They had God to make their laws, and men chosen by Him to administer them. . . . [They were led] in both civil and ecclesiastical affairs. . . . So will it be when the purposes of God shall be accomplished: when ‘the Lord shall be King over the whole earth’ and ‘Jerusalem His throne.’ ‘The law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.’”<sup>32</sup> The Prophet understood that part of his mission was to prepare the earth for that kingdom—to prepare the Church for the coming of Christ, in glory, in his Father’s kingdom as the ruling King of Kings and Lord of Lords (see D&C 101:65; Revelation 19:11–16).<sup>33</sup>

Joseph Smith knew that the kingdom could only be fully established after the Lord’s people had become a “kingdom of priests,” as outlined in the book of Exodus: “Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exodus 19:3–6). Clearly, the Lord intended to gather modern Israel just as he did anciently.

Joseph Smith learned in a revelation given to the Church in January 1841 that the Nauvoo Temple was to be built so that the fullness of the priesthood could be restored, “for there is not a place found on earth that he may come to and restore again

*Wilford Woodruff's 1897 Testimony*

that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fulness of the priesthood” (D&C 124:28). Later the Prophet observed, “Those holding the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood are kings and priests to the Most High God, holding the keys of power and blessings. In fact, that Priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy, and stands as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam.”<sup>34</sup>

The Prophet lived in a democracy and, like the Protestants, had a vision of a church of equals; however, he restored an administrative hierarchy of priesthood leaders consisting of a First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and so forth. But often overlooked is the fact that he expanded and democratized the priesthood base by making the fullness of the priesthood available to all as soon as they were ready. In Nauvoo both men and women received the ordinances associated with temple worship, including the fullness of the priesthood. The Prophet told the sisters of the Relief Society that every member of the Church who was worthy would be given the same priesthood blessings when a place was prepared for that purpose. No revelation or blessing was given to Joseph that the Lord would not give to all Saints when they were ready to receive it.<sup>35</sup>

Once the fullness of the priesthood was restored, Joseph Smith was inspired to establish the Council of the Kingdom.<sup>36</sup> On March 11, 1844, a preliminary meeting was held to form the Council of the Kingdom, according to Wilford Woodruff, “to further the interest of [the] kingdom of God [the Father].”<sup>37</sup> This Council of the Kingdom was established as the political arm or government of the Kingdom to implement the full measure of its designs and purposes. This council was originally composed of twenty-two men and was later described as the “Council of Fifty” when fifty men were inducted on April 18, 1844, in Nauvoo.<sup>38</sup>

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Recently, Richard L. Bushman and Dean C. Jessee identified the Council of the Kingdom as “a shadow government” that would ultimately govern under the direction of Jesus Christ during the Millennium:<sup>39</sup>

In the final six months of his life Joseph Smith set out on a course of political action that outraged his critics. In January 1844, he announced his candidacy for president of the United States and a few months later organized a shadow government called the Kingdom of God, which may have been envisioned as a prototype of Christ’s millennial government of the earth. Whether or not he believed he could win the presidency, he spoke optimistically, as candidates do in the beginning of a campaign. Certainly his patience with government had run out. The Mormons had been abused many times with no compensation for confiscated property from any level of government, and in 1844 they felt the tide of hatred rising again. Smith could not understand why the Constitution did not compel the government to protect the rights of Mormons. His platform defended all downtrodden people of his time: slaves, whom he felt should be purchased from their masters with revenues from public lands; prisoners held under cruel and unsanitary conditions; court-martialed soldiers; and sailors, whose suffering at the hands of tyrannical ship captains was attracting the sympathy of reformers. To all, he promised justice.<sup>40</sup>

The Anointed Quorum, together with the Council of the Kingdom, constituted the Kingdom of God. John Taylor, who was present during these Nauvoo meetings, received a revelation reflecting this definition of the Kingdom of God, together with its purpose:

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Thus saith the Lord God who rules in the heavens above and in the earth beneath, I have introduced My Kingdom and my government, even the Kingdom of God, that my servants have heretofore prophesied of, and that I taught my disciples to pray for, saying “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” for the establishment of my rule, for the introduction of my law, for the protection of my Church, and for the maintenance, promulgation and protection of civil and religious liberty in this nation and throughout the world; and all men of every nation, color and creed shall yet be protected and shielded thereby; And every nation and kindred, and people, and tongue shall yet bow the knee to me, and acknowledge me to be Ahman Christ, to the glory of God the Father.<sup>41</sup>

After attempts to prepare a constitution for this body failed,<sup>42</sup> the Prophet asked and the Lord responded. “Ye are my Constitution and I am your God and ye are my spokesmen, therefore from henceforth keep my commandments.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, the kingdom of God would not have a written constitution like many temporal governments but would instead have a “living constitution,” made up of those who had been called to preside. John Taylor said:

These words are pregnant with meaning & full of intelligence & point out our position in regard of these matters—it is expected of us that [we] can act right—that our interests [are] bound up in the K[ingdom] of God. That we should consider we are not acting for ourselves, but we are the Spokesmen of God selected for that purpose in the interest of God & to bless & exalt all humanity. We acknowledge him as our God and all men who enter this body must acknowledge him here. There

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is peculiar [sic] significance to these things which needs some consideration.<sup>44</sup>

The reason Joseph Smith waited until April 1844 to establish this council was that the Kingdom of God could not be organized until there were men and women who had received the fullness of priesthood. Just as the high priesthood had to be restored before the First Presidency could be organized, the apostleship had to be restored before the Quorum of the Twelve was organized. Likewise, the fullness of the temple ordinances had to be restored before the kingdom of God could be organized.

*Statement 3: "I bear my testimony that in the early spring of 1844, in Nauvoo, the Prophet Joseph Smith called the Twelve Apostles together and he delivered unto them the ordinances of the Church and kingdom of God; and all the keys and powers that God had bestowed upon him, he sealed upon our heads."*

Joseph Smith took another decisive step in his prophetic mission as he prepared the Church and kingdom for his departure, and he may have been concerned about establishing proper succession of authority in the event of his death. Brigham Young, Willard Richards, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and others had already received some of the keys of the kingdom, and Young had become the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.<sup>45</sup> This was the primary core of what Wilford Woodruff said about Nauvoo—his testimony that by March 26, 1844, Joseph Smith gave the Twelve Apostles all the rights, privileges, authorities, and keys, necessary to continue the work of the Lord until the "coming of the Son of Man."<sup>46</sup>

*Statement 4: "And he told us that we must round up our shoulders and bear off this kingdom, or we would be damned."*

*Wilford Woodruff's 1897 Testimony*

This solemn warning is one of the core sayings of the Prophet, as Wilford Woodruff recalled on several occasions, including on October 10, 1887: “I now command you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to round up your shoulders, and bear off this Church and Kingdom of God before heaven and earth, and before God, angels and men; and if you don’t do it you will be damned.”<sup>247</sup>

Nearly ten years later, Ruth May Fox recorded in her diary what she had heard Wilford Woodruff say on March 8, 1896: “Sun. 8th. Attended Conference twice today. Bro. Woodruff at 89 yrs. old bore his testimony to the truth of the gospel and also to listening to the Prophet Joseph for 3 hours when his face was like amber at which time he conferred all the keys that were ever bestowed upon man upon the twelve Apostles, and said they would be damned if they did not use it properly.”<sup>248</sup>

*Statement 5: “I am the only man now living in the flesh who heard that testimony from his mouth, and I know that it was true by the power of God manifest to him.”*

This statement has caused some confusion because Benjamin F. Johnson, a Church patriarch who died in Arizona in 1905, was also present at the “Last Charge” meeting. In his autobiography Johnson recalled:

At one of the last meetings of the Council of Fifty after all had been completed and the keys of power committed, and in the presence of the Quorum of the Twelve and others who were encircled around him, he arose, gave a review of his life and sufferings, and of the testimonies he had borne, and said that the Lord had now accepted his labors and sacrifices, and did not require him longer to carry the responsibilities and burden and bearing of this kingdom, and turning to those around him, including the 12, he said “And in the name of the



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Lord Jesus Christ I now place it upon you my brethren of this council and I shake my skirts clear of all responsibility from this time forth,” springing from the floor and shaking his skirt at the same time.<sup>49</sup>

In another account from a letter to the assistant Church historian, George S. Gibbs, Johnson wrote:

And now returning to the council and the “Last Charge.” Let us remember that by revelation he had reorganized the Holy Priesthood, and by command of the Lord (D&C 124 and D&C 123) had taken from the First Presidency his brother Hyrum to hold as Patriarch, the sealing power, the first and highest honor due to priesthood; that he had turned the keys of endowments, to the last anointing, and sealing together with keys of Salvation for the dead, with the eternity of the marriage covenant and the power of endless lives. All these keys he held, and under these then existing conditions he stood before that association of his select friends, including all the Twelve, and with great feeling and animation he graphically reviewed his life of persecution, labor and sacrifice for the church and kingdom of God, both of which he declared were now organized upon the earth. The burden of which had become too great for him longer to carry, that he was weary and tired with the weight he so long had borne, and he then said, with great vehemence: “And in the name of the Lord, I now shake from my shoulders the responsibilities of bearing off the Kingdom of God to all the world, and here and now I place that responsibility, with all the keys, powers and privileges pertaining thereto, upon the shoulders of you the Twelve Apostles, in connection with this council; and if you will accept this, to do it, God shall bless you mightily and shall

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open your way; and if you do it I now shake my garments clear and free from the blood of this generation and of all men"; and shaking his skirt with great vehemence he raised himself from the floor, while the spirit that accompanied his words thrilled every heart as with a feeling that boded bereavement and sorrow.<sup>50</sup>

In these reminiscences, Johnson states that the meeting was a Council of Fifty gathering and that many more individuals were present, including the Twelve. Johnson became a member of the Council on March 26, and this may have been the only meeting he attended with Woodruff. It is plausible that by 1897 Woodruff had simply forgotten that Johnson was present on that occasion, or he may have believed Johnson had already died. For example, a few years earlier, in 1887, Wilford Woodruff said, "Again, President John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff are the only two men now living in the flesh, who listened to the words and charge of Joseph Smith the Prophet to the Twelve Apostles before his death."<sup>51</sup> Following John Taylor's death in July 1887, Wilford Woodruff wrote to the Church, as president of the Twelve Apostles, on October 10, 1887: "I, Wilford Woodruff, being the last man living in the flesh who was present upon that occasion, feel it a duty I owe the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to the House of Israel, and to the whole world, to bear this my last testimony."<sup>52</sup> The fact is, for the last eleven years of his life, Wilford Woodruff was the only remaining member of the Twelve who had received the "Last Charge," and he testified to that fact. Interestingly, Woodruff affirmed that he heard Joseph Smith repeat that "he had rolled the labor of this Kingdom upon the shoulders of the Twelve, and they must bear it off."<sup>53</sup>

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In a meeting with Salt Lake Temple workers in 1894, fourteen people present, including Franklin D. Richards, Lorenzo Snow, George Q. Cannon, Emmeline B. Wells, Zina D. Young, and Edward Stevenson, stood when asked if they heard the Prophet declare that he had “rolled the work of the Kingdom off upon the shoulders of the Twelve.”<sup>54</sup>

*Statement 6: “At that meeting he stood on his feet for about three hours and taught us the things of the kingdom. His face was as clear as amber, and he was covered with a power that I had never seen in any man in the flesh before.”*

This is another example of a core feature of the story that Woodruff repeated on a number of occasions. Two additional examples include Charles Lowell Walker’s diary entry for 1876 and Abraham H. Cannon’s journal entry in 1895. Walker recorded, “Br. Woo(d)ruff remarked that he had seen the Prophet Joseph stand and talk to them for three hours and his (Joseph’s) face would shine bright as Amber.”<sup>55</sup> Cannon preserved Wilford Woodruff’s words, “When Joseph and Hyrum met with nine of the apostles for the last time, shortly before his death, he was transfigured before them, his face shown like amber.”<sup>56</sup>

*Statement 7: “I bear testimony that Joseph Smith was the author of the endowments as received by the Latter-day Saints. I received my own endowments under his hands and direction, and I know they are true principles.”*

When Wilford Woodruff stated, “I received my own endowments,” he may have used the plural to refer to both his “first anointing,” when he was anointed preparatory to receiving further blessings on December 2, 1843, and his “2d Anointing & sealings,” which he received with his wife Phebe on January 28, 1844.<sup>57</sup> Generally, this last ordinance is referred to as the “ful-

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ness of the priesthood,” though it is sometimes called the second anointing or second endowment.

*Statement 8: “I not only received my own endowments under his hands, but I bear my testimony that Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, George A. Smith, John Taylor and other brethren received their endowments under the hands and direction of the Prophet Joseph; and also my wife Phoebe, Bathsheba Smith, Leonora Taylor, Mary Smith and others whose names I cannot recall now.”*

Sixty-six individuals—thirty-seven men and twenty-nine women—are known to have been endowed during the Prophet’s lifetime, including the Prophet himself. This group constituted the Holy Order, or the Quorum of the Anointed, which met infrequently beginning in May 1842. At first, only men participated, but then in September 28, 1843, women were initiated into this order for the first time in this dispensation. During the Prophet’s ministry, the Holy Order met for special prayer meetings and to discuss doctrine and revelations and initiate additional members into the order. These meetings continued until the Nauvoo Temple was opened in December 1845.

Wilford Woodruff specifically mentions five men who received their temple blessings under the direction of Joseph Smith. This group included Brigham Young, who was endowed on May 4, 1842, and given the second anointing on November 22, 1843; Heber C. Kimball, endowed on May 4, 1842, and given the second anointing on January 20, 1844; Willard Richards, endowed on May 4, 1842, and given the second anointing on January 26, 1844; George A. Smith, endowed on October 8, 1843, and given the second anointing on February 26, 1844; and John Taylor, endowed on September 28, 1843, and given the second anointing on January 30, 1844. Wilford Woodruff noted, “Other brethren

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received their endowments under the hands and direction of the Prophet Joseph.” This group included thirty-one additional men. He also noted that several women received their temple blessings under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He specifically mentioned four women by name: Phebe Carter Woodruff, endowed on October 29, 1843 and given the second anointing on January 28, 1844; Bathsheba W. Bigler Smith, endowed on December 23, 1843, and given the second anointing on January 31, 1844; Leonora Cannon Taylor, endowed and given the second anointing on November 1, 1843; Mary Fielding Smith, endowed on October 1, 1843, and given the second anointing on October 8, 1843. Woodruff also said that “others whose names I cannot recall now” received their blessings under the direction of the Prophet before his death in 1844. This group includes at least twenty-five women not mentioned by name.

*Statement 9: “The Prophet Joseph laid down his life for the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ, and he will be crowned as a martyr in the presence of God and the Lamb.”*

Most interesting here is Wilford Woodruff’s use of the phrase “for the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ.” Notice a similar usage from his February 1845 reminiscence: “Our beloved Prophet and Patriarch . . . sealed their testimony with their blood . . . for the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ”; this is an almost word-for-word usage separated by more than fifty years.<sup>58</sup>

*Statement 10: “In all his testimonies to us the power of God was visibly manifest with the Prophet Joseph.”*

Edward Stevenson remembered a sermon the Prophet gave in 1834:

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In 1834 Joseph Smith the Prophet preached with such power as had not there ever before been witnessed in this nineteenth century. . . .

I can very well remember many of the words of the boy Prophet as they were uttered in simplicity, but with a power which was irresistible to all present, although at that time I could not understand how it was that so few comparatively obeyed it. Three elder brothers of mine, as well as our neighbors, repeatedly in my hearing spoke highly of the new doctrines—that they were scriptural, so plainly set forth, and that, too, with such force as never before was experienced in this section of country.<sup>59</sup>

In 1905, Mary Elizabeth Lightner described a similar occurrence in Kirtland: “Those who looked at him that day said there was a search light within him, over every part of his body. I never saw anything like it on the earth. I could not take my eyes off him; he got so white that anyone who saw him would have thought he was transparent. I remember I thought I could almost see the cheek bones through the flesh.”<sup>60</sup>

*Statement 11: “This is my testimony, spoken by myself into a talking machine on this the 19th day of March, 1897, in the 91st year of my age. Wilford Woodruff.”*

Wilford Woodruff finished his testimony by providing the historical details necessary to establish the reliability of the source in the future by providing the date recorded, the kind of instrument used, and his identity.

CONCLUSION

Eyewitness accounts, both oral and written, can be useful in efforts to reconstruct the past, especially when contemporary sources are limited. Sometimes the oral and written sources may

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coexist during the lifetime of the witness and even beyond, as was the case with Wilford Woodruff, who left an audio recording and written document of what he saw, heard, and experienced in Nauvoo between 1842 and 1844.

Wilford Woodruff's 1897 testimony and his numerous other accounts of the "Last Charge" meeting in Nauvoo reveal the characteristic features of different retellings of a single event, but the key points remain constant. These fixed core points in the story include the chief participants (Joseph Smith and members of the Twelve Apostles), the location (an upper room in Nauvoo), the date (spring 1844), what Joseph Smith spoke of (delivering the keys and rolling the burden onto the shoulders of the Twelve; the solemn warning to them), how long he spoke (about three hours), and a description of what Joseph Smith looked like during the meeting (his face shone like amber). Even though Wilford Woodruff's 1897 testimony reflects a post-Martyrdom point of view, it nevertheless provides a distinct account of Joseph Smith's pre-Martyrdom activities, including meeting with the Twelve for the last time in Nauvoo. Additionally, Woodruff made the voice recording of his testimony at a point in time when almost all of the other witnesses of those events had died. In 1897, only three members of the Holy Order were still alive.<sup>61</sup> And only two persons, Wilford Woodruff and Benjamin F. Johnson, were alive who saw and heard Joseph Smith the Prophet deliver his "Last Charge" to the Twelve in the spring of 1844.

In 1878 President Woodruff spoke regarding a wide range of material he was leaving the Church, including his diaries and other records. He said, "I warn the future Historians to give Credence to my History of this Church and kingdom for my Testimony is true, and the truth of its Record will be manifest in the world to Come."<sup>62</sup> Arthur Winter, Church reporter, noted in his

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journal on March 19, 1897, “Several days ago President Woodruff dictated to me his testimony on several points connected with the work of God, his intention being to get his testimony written down just as he wanted it and then he could speak it into the phonograph. Today he repeated it into the talking machine, so that in years to come, long after he shall have passed away, one may hear reproduced by the phonograph, the words he spoke and the very tone of his voice.”<sup>63</sup> Wilford Woodruff’s 1897 testimony remains, as he expected it to be, his “enduring witness of the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith, who conferred priesthood keys upon the Twelve and commissioned them three months before his death.”<sup>64</sup>

Wilford Woodruff’s 1897 testimony provides historians an eyewitness account of “the last instructions at the last meeting . . . with the Prophet Joseph.”<sup>65</sup> In that meeting the Prophet Joseph Smith stood before members of the Twelve for three hours and “closed that speech, never-to-be-forgotten in time or in eternity” with his “Last Charge.”<sup>66</sup> Woodruff recalled on numerous occasions a most solemn warning as part of that “Last Charge”: “Now, you Apostles, if you do not rise up and bear off this kingdom, and I have given it to you, you will be damned.”<sup>67</sup>

### NOTES

1. See Mark L. McConkie, “The Problems and Promise of Historical Memories,” in *Remembering Joseph: Personal Recollections of Those Who Knew the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 1–25.
2. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 5.
3. “City of Nauvoo, September 15, 1844. Trial of Elder Rigdon,” *Times and Seasons*, September 15, 1844, 651.



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4. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898, Typescript*, ed. Scott G. Kenney (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983), March 27, 1844.
5. Clayton Diary, March 26, 1844, Church History Library, as cited in *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, ed. George D. Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 128.
6. Joseph Smith Diary, March 26, 1844, cited in *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, ed. Scott H. Faulring (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1981), 461.
7. Joseph Smith Diary, March 10, 1844, cited in Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record*, 459; this sentence lined through in original.
8. George T. M. Davis, *Authentic Account of the Massacre of Joseph Smith* (St. Louis: n.p., 1844), 7; emphasis in original. Davis, a newspaper editor, was in Nauvoo gathering information just before Joseph Smith's death; see *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 6:587.
9. An introduction to this artifact is found in Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Steven C. Harper, "'This Is My Testimony, Spoken by Myself into a Talking Machine': Wilford Woodruff's 1897 Statement in Stereo," *BYU Studies* 45, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 112–16.
10. *Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, March 12, 1897, Church History Library.
11. *Journal History*, March 19, 1897.
12. Truman G. Madsen, quoted in Holzapfel and Harper, "'This Is My Testimony,'" 114.
13. Michael De Groote, "Cylinders Preserve the First Recording of a Prophet," *Mormon Times*, June 2, 2010, <http://www.mormontimes.com/article/13823/cylinders-preserve-the-first-recording-of-a-prophet>.
14. De Groote, "Cylinders Preserve the First Recording."
15. Walter L. Welch, Memorandum, Syracuse University Library, New York.
16. Welch, Memorandum.

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17. Transcript of Wilford Woodruff's testimony, March 19, 1897, Church History Library; spelling and punctuation modernized.
18. Susa Young Gates, "The Temple Worker's Excursion," *Young Woman's Journal*, August 1894, 513.
19. Gates, "Temple Worker's Excursion," 511.
20. "Wilford Woodruff to Church," *The Prophet* (New York), October 19, 1844, 3.
21. "Our Work: The General Annual Conference of Young Men's and Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Associations," *Improvement Era*, August 1898, 781–82.
22. Wilford Woodruff, "The Keys of the Kingdom," *Millennial Star*, September 2, 1889, 546.
23. Woodruff, "Keys of the Kingdom," 546.
24. The most recent treatment of this is David J. Whittaker, "Studying Joseph Smith Jr.: A Guide to the Sources," in *Joseph Smith Jr.: Reappraisals after Two Centuries*, ed. Reid L. Neilson and Terryl L. Givens (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 222–23. Whittaker quotes Dean Jessee's essay, "Priceless Words and Fallible Moments: Joseph Smith as Seen in the Efforts to Preserve His Discourses," *BYU Studies* 31, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 23. Jessee estimates that Joseph Smith gave more than 450 public discourses, though not more than 10 percent were recorded, and all recordings were incomplete and most come from the Nauvoo years. For a collection of Joseph Smith's Nauvoo discourses, see Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980).
25. See Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 501–2.
26. For a brief overview of the introduction of temple worship in Nauvoo, see Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, a People of Promise* (Provo, UT: BYU Press; and Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 237–65. For an examination of individuals who received their temple blessings between 1842 and 1844, see Devery S. Anderson, "The Anointed Quorum in Nauvoo,

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- 1842–45,” *Journal of Mormon History* 29, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 137–57; Devery S. Anderson and Gary James Bergera, *Joseph Smith’s Quorum of the Anointed, 1842–1845: A Documentary History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005); and Andrew F. Ehat, “Joseph Smith’s Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question” (MA thesis, Brigham Young University, 1982).
27. Apparently, Doctrine and Covenants sections 127 and 128 were prepared as talks to be read to the Saints.
  28. Charles Lowell Walker Diary, August 20, 1898, Church History Library, in *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, ed. A. Karl Larson and Katharine Miles Larson (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1980), 2:880–81.
  29. Revelation to John Taylor, June 27, 1882, quoted in Fred C. Collier, *Unpublished Revelations of the Prophets and Presidents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Collier’s Publishing, 1979), 133.
  30. *Times and Seasons*, July 15, 1842, 855–58, quoted in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), 248–55.
  31. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 249.
  32. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 252.
  33. *Church History in the Fulness of Times* (Salt Lake City: Church Educational System, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 270.
  34. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 322.
  35. Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 4.
  36. See Anderson, “Anointed Quorum in Nauvoo,” 137–57; Anderson and Bergera, *Joseph Smith’s Quorum of the Anointed*; and Ehat, “Joseph Smith’s Introduction of Temple Ordinances.”
  37. *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 2:366.
  38. Joseph Smith said, “Now we have the number which the Lord requires— [but] we will take a few more on our own hook,” quoted in Andrew F. Ehat, “‘It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth’: Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God,” *BYU Studies* 20, no. 3 (Spring 1980): 258.

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39. Richard Lyman Bushman and Dean C. Jessee, "Joseph Smith and His Papers," in Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard C. Jensen, eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008–2009), xxxi; see also D. Michael Quinn, "The Council of Fifty and its Members, 1844–1945," *BYU Studies* 20, no. 2 (1980): 163; and Ehat, "It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth," 253.
40. See Bushman and Jessee, "Joseph Smith and His Papers," xxxi.
41. Revelation to John Taylor, June 27, 1882, quoted in Collier, *Unpublished Revelations*, 133.
42. D. Michael Quinn states, "The 'constitution' in the council's initiation ceremony was a constitution for the Kingdom of God based on the U.S. Constitution. A committee of the council spent a full week in an attempt to write this document and at the 18 April meeting confessed its failure" (*The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994], 131).
43. Joseph F. Smith, Minutes of the Council of Fifty, April 21, 1880, cited in Ehat, "It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth," 259.
44. Minutes, April 8, 1881, cited in Ehat, "It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth," 259.
45. Wilford Woodruff recalled this important period: "During December 1843 and January, February, and March, 1844, Joseph Smith gave the Twelve Apostles their Endowments, their First and Second Anointings, and taught them many things appertaining to the Kingdom of God" (Wilford Woodruff, Testimony, September 21, 1883, Church History Library).
46. Lisle G. Brown gives further insight:

"Within [the Anointed Quorum and the Council of Fifty] the Quorum of the Twelve occupied a unique position—it was the *only* priesthood quorum completely represented in both the Holy Order and the Council of Fifty. Such an unusual situation was not merely coincidental, because Joseph Smith used this quorum to forge an amalgamation of the two groups under the apostolic umbrella of the Twelve. Without such foresight by the Prophet,

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a power struggle between the two organizations, following the Martyrdom, could have enveloped the Church in a crisis which would have torn it apart.

“Joseph Smith commenced this amalgamation with the second anointings of the Twelve. Brigham Young and his wife, Mary Ann, received their anointings on November 22, 1843. Following this anointing the Prophet directed Young to administer second anointings to each of the Twelve then living in Nauvoo. Between January 20 and 30, 1844, eight of the Apostles received this ordinance. Wilford Woodruff recalled this important period: ‘During December 1843 and January, February, and March, 1844, Joseph Smith gave the Twelve Apostles their Endowments, their First and Second Anointings, and taught them many things appertaining to the Kingdom of God.’ Having bestowed the keys of the kingdom on the Apostles through the fulness of temple ordinances, the Prophet charged the Twelve to shoulder the burdens of directing the Church and Kingdom. The Prophet issued the so-called ‘last charge’ to the Twelve before both the Holy Order and the Council of Fifty. . . .

“In the multifaced struggle of succession the role of the Holy Order has been masked by the Twelve’s position in the Church hierarchy. Many statements, made by the Twelve concerning succession, only make sense if they are placed in the context of the ordinances and charges given to the Apostles before the Holy Order and the Council of Fifty. The role of the Council of Fifty in succession was minor, but the Holy Order played a significant part in the crisis, particularly in the attempts of Sidney Rigdon and William Smith to wrest control of the Church and Kingdom from the Twelve.” (“The Holy Order in Nauvoo,” <http://www.lds-mormon.com/holyordr.shtml>.)

47. “Epistle to the Saints in Semi-Annual Conference, October 10, 1887,” in *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, comp. James R. Clark (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 3:134.
48. Ruth May Fox Diary, March 8, 1896, Church History Library.
49. *My Life’s Review: The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin Johnson*, ed. Lyndon W. Cook and Kevin V. Harker (Provo, UT: Grandin Book Company, 1997), 89.

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50. Benjamin F. Johnson to George S. Gibbs, October 1903, 17–25, 43, Church History Library.
51. Wilford Woodruff to Heber J. Grant, March 28, 1887, Church History Library.
52. Wilford Woodruff, “An Epistle to the Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” *Millennial Star*, November 14, 1887, 722.
53. Wilford Woodruff Papers, September 21, 1883, Church History Library.
54. Gates, “Temple Worker’s Excursion,” 514.
55. Walker Diary, December 3, 1876; as cited in Larson and Larson, *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, 1:558.
56. Abraham H. Cannon Diary, April 7, 1895, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
57. Joseph Smith Diary, December 23, 1843, Church History Library, cited in Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record*, 429; *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 2:344.
58. Wilford Woodruff to the British Saints, *Millennial Star*, February 1845, 134.
59. Edward Stevenson, as cited in McConkie, *Remembering Joseph*, 310.
60. Testimony of Mary Elizabeth Lightner, address at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, April 14, 1905, quoted in Blaine M. Yorgason, *Spiritual Progression in the Last Days* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 232–33.
61. Only two members of the Holy Order (Anointed Quorum) outlived Wilford Woodruff: Jane Bicknell Young (1814–1905) and Bathsheba W. Bigler Smith (1822–1910).
62. *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 7:359, July 5, 1877.
63. Arthur Winter, Journal, March 19, 1897, Church History Library.
64. Holzapfel and Harper, “This is My Testimony,” 115–16.
65. Wilford Woodruff, “The Keys of the Kingdom,” *Millennial Star*, September 2, 1889, 546.
66. Wilford Woodruff, “Epistle to the Members of the Church,” 722.
67. Wilford Woodruff, in Conference Report, April 10, 1898, 89.