



# Wilford Woodruff's Witness: The Development of Temple Doctrine

*By Jennifer Ann Mackley*

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## **Wilford Woodruff's Witness: The Development of Temple Doctrine** By Jennifer Ann Mackley

The history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' temple doctrine begins in 1823, when Joseph Smith is taught of the ancient prophet Elijah's mission to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers." Following the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods in 1829 and the conferral of priesthood keys in 1836, temple ordinances were introduced through Joseph Smith. After Smith's death in 1844, his successor Brigham Young refined the rituals according to Smith's instructions, administered new ordinances, and suspended others as the Church and circumstances evolved. In 1894, the prophet Wilford Woodruff received a revelation that would resolve unsettled issues and establish modern temple worship. Over the course of the nineteenth century, Woodruff was a witness to and catalyst in the implementation of temple ordinances and practices. Through the years he continued the pattern of seeking revelation in order to clarify rites and effect changes based on practical experience. Jennifer Mackley's meticulously researched biographical narrative chronicles the development of temple doctrine through the examination of Wilford Woodruff's personal life. The account unfolds in Woodruff's own words, drawn from primary sources including journals, discourses, and letters. It follows Woodruff's experiences and perspectives on decisions made by Smith, Young, and John Taylor in relation to the temple ceremonies and ordinances during their tenures as leaders of the LDS Church. The book explores how Woodruff came to firmly believe in revelation and the role of prophets but not expect perfection in either. Ultimately, the narrative emphasizes the personal side of Woodruff's historically significant life, conveying the depth of his sacrifices for his beliefs, the importance he placed on the redemption of his extended family--both living and dead--and the impact this level of focus had on his daily pursuits. Mackley elucidates the doctrine's sixty-year progression from Old Testament practices of washings and anointings in the 1830s, to the endowment, sealings, and priesthood adoptions in the 1840s, through all of the vicarious ordinances for the dead in the 1870s, to the sealing of multigenerational families in the 1890s--all in an understandable reference work for members of the LDS church and anyone else interested in its history and development. Her narrative is enhanced by 120 archival images (some previously unpublished), as well as extensive footnotes and citations for the reader's further

study. Many existing books discuss specific temple ordinances, but the complete history of all temple ordinances has never been included in a single volume--until now.

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## **Wilford Woodruff's Witness: The Development of Temple Doctrine By Jennifer Ann Mackley** **Bibliography**

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### **Editorial Review**

#### Review

"The author has a very firm grasp of the subject matter. She has written a great tribute to a woefully under-appreciated leader."

**Brian H. Stuy, Editor of *Collected Discourses Delivered by Wilford Woodruff et al.***

"Jennifer Mackley's background as an attorney is evident in her impeccable research and reliance on primary sources. Wilford Woodruff couldn't have asked for a more eloquent or convincing advocate."

**Ruth H. Maxwell, Author of *Eighteen Roses Red***

#### Review

"Looking at Woodruff, the temple, and church policy/development as an interdependent triad is insightful and can even be paradigm shifting.

Woodruff is quoted extensively and on issues where Woodruff is silent, Mackley avoids imposing her own psychoanalysis of Wilford. . . . The book is aimed at giving the reader a window into how Wilford saw/interpreted/understood the role of temples in Mormonism.

. . . There are a large number of great photos, some of which had never been published previously. It seemed that every few page turns there would be another photo. The photos were relevant to the surrounding text and really helped bring the book to life. . . . I thought it flowed very well. Among the many temple rituals/developments discussed in the book, the law of adoption is covered in great detail. Even though I've read the major historical articles covering the law of adoption, I still gained new insights about that practice from this book.

For me the most lasting impression from the book was the interdependent influence among Wilford, Temples/temple rituals, and Church policy. Wilford not only played a major role in shaping temple practice, but his heavy involvement in temple rituals shaped him in a powerful way. . . This book has the potential to influence how members view the fluidity of our ordinances. Following Wilford through the changes in the church highlights how these practices have been adjusted over time while also delivering a narrative flow that is often lacking in an abstract discussion of ritual development. It is difficult to review these changes and retain a view that the way things are now is how they should always be.

. . . I'd love to see members who wouldn't normally venture into reading new Mormon history read this book. It is faith-affirming yet can be paradigm shifting.

. . . If you are someone who can't stand reading faithful views on problematic issues in Mormonism, then this book might not be for you. If you are such a person but are interested in trying to see things through the lens of Wilford Woodruff, then I think you would enjoy the book. Viewing the temple and church through Wilford's eyes can give new insight even to those who are very familiar with Mormon history."

**Geoff Nelson, [RationalFaiths.com](http://RationalFaiths.com)**

#### Review

"A meticulous history of the early days of Mormonism.

Joseph Smith and Brigham Young tend to be the stars of stories about Mormonism's founding, but Mackley's debut focuses instead on one of their lesser-known contemporaries: Wilford Woodruff, an early and influential leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Drawing heavily from Woodruff's journals as well as an extensive selection of other archival materials, Mackley paints a detailed picture of the first several decades of Mormonism. In particular, she focuses on the . . . temples, describing the practices instituted there and how they changed over time. Some aspects of the story are of general interest; especially rich are Woodruff's accounts of the Saints' frequent clashes with the federal government over polygamy and their settling in Salt Lake City. History buffs will also appreciate the wealth of primary sources, including archival black-and-white photographs and documents often interspersed with the text as well as more than 100 pages of citations and appendices in the backmatter. . . . Mackley makes no attempt to convert those readers who might raise an eyebrow at God's communication. . . . Still, as a feat of sheer research and historical synthesis, Mackley's work is remarkable, providing deep insight into an obscure corner of the past."

### **--Kirkus Review**

### **Users Review**

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#### **Marjorie Brown:**

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maybe their experience. Not only the storyplot that share in the books. But also they write about advantage about something that you need example of this. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach children, there are many kinds of book that you can get now. The authors on this planet always try to improve their expertise in writing, they also doing some exploration before they write on their book. One of them is this Wilford Woodruff's Witness: The Development of Temple Doctrine.

**Calvin Lee:**

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