

PERUSAL SCRIPT

Willford Woodruff
G O D ' S F I S H E R M A N



A play by
Tim Slover & James Arrington



Salt Lake City

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WILFORD WOODRUFF: GOD'S FISHERMAN

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Perhaps you've seen a picture of Wilford Woodruff: stoic, deep-set eyes, firm jaw, a very sober-looking man. But do we really know him? If we do know Wilford Woodruff, it is usually as the writer of the Manifesto that officially ended the practice of polygamy in the LDS church, or perhaps as the author of the dedicatory prayer for the Salt Lake Temple. His stern old eyes look out from the photographs of the period, and in them flares unswerving commitment to the Lord and his purposes.

But there is a younger Wilford Woodruff with whom most are not acquainted: a man who coupled his commitment with high spirits, boundless enthusiasm, and seemingly endless energy. That is the Wilford Woodruff celebrated in this play. The younger Wilford was first and for most a missionary. He loved the gospel he discovered twenty-five, and the eagerness he felt to share it with his fellowmen resulted in an explosion of baptisms wherever he preached.

Wilford was a proselyting phenomenon, a missionary so successful that even his enemies who listened to him lay out the principles of the gospel were converted. Of all the great missionaries in the Church's history, Wilford was perhaps the greatest. How did he do it? There are glimpses in this one-man play: the unshakable commitment to the gospel and its appointed leaders, especially Joseph Smith, was a hallmark of his entire life. There were also his guilelessness and his humility, his ability to endure hardship, his dry sense of humor. He was told once that his "jokes have more vinegar than molasses in them." There was also his courage in the face of physical and spiritual dangers, his meticulous attention to details, and his willingness to allow God's grace, rather than his own judgment, to form his opinion of others.

But two facets of this fascinating man's personality stand out above all the rest. First, he was willing; when a job needed to be done, Wilford was there at the front of the line. Second, he walked with his hand firmly in the grasp of God's hand. So completely integrated were temporal and spiritual affairs to Wilford that he took it as a matter of course that God should tell him from moment to moment what he should do in every aspect of his life. Wilford was not surprised when he was visited by angels or devils. He would have been surprised they had stayed away.

Every life is a grand play, and Wilford chose to write much of his down. This made the playwrights' work much easier. With rare exceptions, mostly involving connective material, this entire script was pieced together from Wilford Woodruff's own words taken from his writings, diaries, speeches, and family lore. The playwrights thank all those who were instrumental in the research, especially Thomas Alexander, Leonard J. Arrington, Signature Books (whose generous loan of *Wilford Woodruff's Journals* was tremendously helpful), the Mormon History Association, and our long-suffering companions, Mary Slover and Lisa Arrington.

Wilford Woodruff: God's Fisherman was commissioned by the Mormon History Association and premiered 6 July 1987 at its annual meeting at Oxford University in Oxford, England, in celebration of the sesquicentennial of the British Missions. It later appeared on the stage of BYU's Nelke Theatre and in other theatrical venues along the Wasatch Front and in Denver. Tim Slover acted the role of his great-great-grandfather, and James Arrington directed and produced the play.

ADAPTATION TO A READER'S THEATRE SCRIPT:

The narrative can be handled by Wilford, himself, or the narration could be divided up between several readers, with Wilford speaking some of it, PLUS his lines of dialog. Other lines of dialog could be handled by other actors for other characters.

GOD'S FISHERMAN by Tim Lover and James Arrington. 1man. The story of Wilford Woodruff, a great missionary for the Lord Jesus Christ. Wilford Woodruff was a man who coupled his commitment with high spirits, boundless enthusiasm, and seemingly endless energy. This one man play tells the story of young Wilford on his various missions. How did he do it? There are glimpses in this one-man play: the unshakable commitment to the gospel and its appointed leaders, especially Joseph Smith, was a hallmark of his entire life. There were also his guilelessness and his humility, his ability to endure hardship, his dry sense of humor.

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ACT ONE

SCENE: 23 July 1847, a secluded area close by a temporary Mormon camp in the Wasatch Mountains, about a day's drive by wagon team from the Salt Lake Valley. It is morning, and the quiet calls of Rocky Mountain birds can be heard, as well as the gurgle of a mountain creek. The stream itself, delineated by rocks and driftwood, 'runs' diagonally across the right downstage corner and out into the audience. Scattered across the stage are accoutrements of camp life: a rough three-legged stool; a sawed-off stump to sit or set things upon; a rough trail tripod on which to hang drying clothes; and, most prominent, a very large wooden traveling chest, typical of those in which the Mormon pioneers carried their belongings. During the course of the play, out of this chest will come many things: clothing, harness, fishing tackle, a pot of grease, a cane, etc.

Entering in a burst of energy from upstage is WILFORD WOODRUFF, dressed practically for pioneering and carrying a very fine English fly-fishing rod and a wooden bucket filled with clothes he has just washed. WILFORD is forty, but his busy life has left him no time to feel this much age. He moves with the energy and buoyancy of a man who always has too much to do and enjoys it. He speaks with a trace of the accent of his New England origins.

WILFORD walks downstage center and addresses the audience directly. This will be his style of presentation throughout the play except on those occasions when he is dramatizing a remembered scene. In those instances, he will speak to imaginary people as if they were present and sometimes act out their responses.

WILFORD: We've had our lunch and he's dozing now. There's no hurry this afternoon for a change, so I figure if we stay some rods off we can talk, while I use my fly rod and get some dinner.

A few days ago I rigged up this Liverpool fly rod ...

(Shows fly rod to audience)

... for the first time in America.

(He carefully sets the rod down in a safe place; then, while speaking, he removes clothes from the bucket and hangs them to dry on the tripod.)

I went to a brook where a good many of the Brethren were already baiting their hooks with fresh meat and grasshoppers, but not catching any fish. Well, this being the first time I ever tried the artificial fly in this country, I flung it upon the water, and I watched it with as much interest as Benjamin Franklin did his kite when he tried to draw lightning from the sky. I caught twelve in a few hours, while the rest of the Brethren combined did not catch the sum of three pounds the whole day, proof positive that the artificial fly is now by far the best thing known to fish with. And I have the only one in the company. 'Course, I've been fishing all my life. I was born on the banks of a trout stream on March 1, 1807, and, I believe, began fishing on March the second.

My brother Azmon and I were the most successful bait fishermen in Farmington, Connecticut, as everyone there acknowledged.

(He goes to the wooden chest, opens it and takes out a small cane fishing fly container. He opens it and shows the flies to the audience.)

But I didn't learn the art of fly fishing until I went to England, and I picked it up from Father Richard

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Smithies, who is considered that country's greatest fisherman. Now, he showed me how to tie these artificial flies, making them from bird's feathers of various colors with a hook concealed in each, calculated to imitate the flies a fish might find in any given season of the year. You tie one to five flies on the line, you fling it upon the water, the trout takes it instantly as the natural fly and then, FFFFFFttt.

(He gleefully pantomimes pulling trout from a river.)

Oh, I've been doing a lot of fishing the last few days. Having all kinds of luck--good, bad, and indifferent. Fished for half an hour Thursday. I couldn't start a single fish. Then I found an eddy with three or four fish in it. They jumped at the hooks as though there was a bushel of trout in the hole.

Now, yesterday I fished from the back of a horse on account of the heavy brush on both sides of the stream, and I felt as if I'd have an Indian arrow in my side or a grizzly bear upon my back the whole time, for I was in danger of both. The Lord has said, "Let them have dominion over the fishes of the sea 2 So I have dominion as often as my labors will allow.

(He closes the fly box thoughtfully. Then he takes his journal from the chest and closes the lid.)

Oh, I have thought about your question. It's a curious question; it has caused me to reflect and to look over my journal some. I am considered somewhat enthusiastic on this subject of journalizing. But you know, I have had this spirit upon me ever since I first entered the Church: to write down the affairs of my life, the history of the Church, the sermons of Joseph and others, and it's a good thing, too, because the official historians of the Church have tended to apostatize and take their journals with them.

Well, whenever I have heard a sermon from Joseph or one of these great men, I can't eat, sleep, or drink until I write it down. And I remember it all line for line until it's written. Then the Lord takes it from my mind, you see; that seems to be a gift of God to me. Well, anyway, I have looked over my journals, as I say, and I believe I can answer the question, which was, if I recollect correctly, "How did the son of a Yankee miller wind up here?" In fact, as we're in no particular hurry, I'll give you something like a full answer.

(He walks to the stump, sits, and settles himself to tell a story.)

Now, the trout stream that I was born on turned the wheels of a flour mill and a sawmill owned by my father, Apeck, and my grandfather, Eldad, for many years. They named me Wilford for no particular reason I can discover. As a boy, I was given to running about mostly and getting into scrapes. Connecticut was just then emerging from under the influence of the Blue Laws. Do you know about those? They were worked up to make people live by religion. Now under the Blue Laws, no man, child, or boy of any age could do any work from sunset Saturday night until Sunday night. We had to sit very still and say over the Presbyterian catechism and passages from the Bible. They told us children we were lucky; people were no longer burned at the stake or half drowned in the ducking stool. But I dared no more go out and play on a Sunday than I dared put my hand in the fire. I didn't like church much as a boy.

But I knew my Bible. And I prayed to the Lord many an hour to let me live to see a prophet or an apostle. You know, when I was twenty-five the Lord gave me that privilege.

(He acts out the following scene.)

Now, I had just been baptized and gone to Kirtland, Ohio, to join Zion's Camp, and I there had my first view of Joseph Smith, the prophet and seer which God raised up in these last days.

Now, this first introduction was not of a kind to satisfy the pre-conceived notion of the sectarian mind as to what a prophet ought to be or how he ought to look, for there he stood, a twenty-seven-year-old man in a

very old hat shooting at a mark with a brace of pistols.

(The sound of a gun firing is heard. WILFORD responds as if in the scene.)

"Good one."

Well, when he was through, I was introduced. Brother Joseph shook my hand most heartily and he said, "Brother Woodruff, I've been out shooting at a mark; wanted to see if I could hit anything. Do you have any objection to it?"

"Oh, no," said I, "There's no law against a man shooting at a mark, that I know of."

He remarked that this was the first hour he'd spent in recreation for a long time. And he invited me to make his habitation my home while I tarried in Kirtland. This I eagerly accepted, and I watched him pretty closely to see what I could learn.

Now, shortly after we arrived at his house, Brother Joseph pulled out a wolf skin. He said, "Brother Woodruff, I want you to help me tan this." Well, he was going with us on Zion's Camp, and he wanted this wolf skin for his wagon seat as he had no buffalo robe. So I pulled off my coat, and we stretched that skin across the back of a chair and soon we had it tanned.

The next day I was introduced to Elder Brigham Young, whose hands were full of butcher knives. He gave me one, told me,

(Imitating Brigham's New England sternness)

"Go out and put a good handle on it," which I did. Well, the Lord had answered my boyhood prayers, but I had to smile at my first introductions to the prophets of God.

But, getting back to my boyhood. You know, life is a bumpy road, and it's rarely straight. Now, I had thought that I would enjoy the pursuits of youth like my friends did. But I didn't. Oh, for a while I played at different things and games, the playing of cards and such, but if ever I was led to stake anything at the card table, I had the providential good fortune to lose, and this cut off the natural encouragement of engaging in such a vice.

I soon lost all interest in cards, and in the ballroom, and in the company of those who enjoyed such pleasures.

(He pauses, lost in an unhappy memory.)

In fact, so much was this the case, I felt like a speckled bird in the midst of my companions. So I took up a solitary sport, the reading of histories. Well, I didn't want to waste my time reading novels.

Now, when I was twenty years of age I left my father's house never to return, except as a visitor. I went first to run my Aunt Helen Wheeler's flour mill. As I entered upon the stage of life to act for myself and be my own counselor, form my own opinion in the broad open world, my mind was filled with my serious reflections.

(Caught up in the memory WILFORD walks over to the "island" in the "stream.")

There was an island in the middle of the stream that the mill was on--most beautiful place I ever saw. It was covered with flowers, thickly studded with tall waving pines, with a rapid current of water dashing on the rocks.

(He lies on his back gazing at the sky)

I retired to this pleasant retreat many times, both by day by night to offer up my soul in prayer to the Lord. You see, I wanted to find the right way, the right things to do with my life. I would lie there, and I would think about all of the gold and the wealth of the rich and about the power of presidents, kings, and rulers, and of the innumerable paths through which the giddy world travels in search of pleasure and happiness. But

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while I was lying there, it would seem to me that the mountains, the hills and the valleys and the sun, the moon, and the stars and all creation were united in the praise of the Lord.

(He stands up, filled with resolve.)

I became convinced that no man could obtain that which would feed his immortal soul except God was his friend and Jesus Christ his advocate. I decided on that island that I would follow God at all costs, no matter what. But then I didn't know how exactly. Now, I could plainly see by reading the Bible that baptism by immersion was a necessary ordinance, so I asked a Baptist minister to baptize me.

(He acts out his responses to the conversation.)

"But why won't you baptize me?... "

"Well, surely if Christ received the ordinance, then I need to be baptized "

"No. Respectfully, sir, I cannot join your church "

"Well, because, as I've said, I find your church does not comply with the early Church of Christ, and so I ..."

"Now, wait! Will you, a Baptist minister, have the damnation of a willing but unbaptized soul upon your conscience for ever?"

(Turns back to the audience.)

He baptized me. So, when I was twenty-three years of age, I had joined no church, but I was baptized. Then in the winter of 1833, two missionaries of the Mormon church came by our home in New York. Oh, I was then farming with my brother Azmon and his wife in New York on the eastern border of Lake Ontario.

(Getting sidetracked.)

We continued fishing, of course. One morning we caught five hundred salmon, very few of which were under twenty pounds, while a few weighed forty pounds. Good fishing.

(Returns.)

Well, I'd heard about these Mormons before. I'd read about them in a newspaper article which ridiculed them because they claimed to have new revelation, but I had been favorably impressed.

(He grows thoughtful again, walks to the stump and sits down.)

And then another thing happened to me in my boyhood which put me on the lookout for new religions. It's kind of a peculiar story. I had known an aged man named Robert Mason who was a kind of a prophet. Anyway, he believed it was the right and privilege of every honest-hearted man and woman to receive light and knowledge and revelation by the prayer of faith. The last time I ever saw him, he told me he had had such a revelation. He said

(imitating Mason's thick New England dialect:)

"The voice of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Son of man, thou hast sought me diligently to know the truth concerning Church and kingdom among men. My Church is not established among men in the generation to which you belong, but in the days of your children, it shall be made manifest with all the gifts and blessings enjoyed by saints of past ages.' Now, he looked at me very hard as if to discern my soul. And he said, 'Wilford, I shall never partake of this fruit in the flesh, but you will, and you will become a conspicuous actor in the new kingdom.'" Well, those were the last words he ever spoke to me upon the face of the earth. So when I heard about these Mormons, it jogged my memory, you might say. Azmon and I weren't home when the Mormons came, but they informed Azmon's wife they were to preach that evening at the schoolhouse.

(WILFORD gets up suddenly, walks briskly back to the chest, as though walking from the fields

to his home.)

Well, when I arrived home and she told me, I immediately turned and out my horses

(Pantomimes shoeing away horses)

--"Hyah!"-- and I started for that schoolhouse without, waiting for supper. On the way, I prayed that if these men were servants of God, I might know it.

(He pantomimes opening the schoolhouse door.)

But when I arrived at the place of meeting, I found it was packed.

(He spots Azmon in the crowd.)

Azmon was already there, but he hadn't been able to save me a spot. So I crowded my way through the assembly, "Excuse me Pardon me "and I seated myself on a writing desk at the very front where I could see and hear everything that took place.

Now, one of the missionaries, whose name was Zeta Pulsipher, opened the meeting with a hymn and a prayer. Then he preached to us. The power of God rested mightily upon him. He bore strong testimony of the Prophet Joseph and of the Book of Mormon.

When he finished his discourse, I truly felt that I had just heard the first true gospel sermon of my life. Here was what I had long been looking for, apostles and prophets, the same as the ancient Church. All of the gifts and blessings Father Mason had spoken of. The Spirit bore witness to me, and, before I knew it, I leaped to my feet.

(He jumps up on the chest and addresses the meeting.)

"Friends and neighbors, I feel to exhort you not to oppose these men, for they are true servants of God! They have preached to us tonight the pure gospel of Jesus Christ! I witness to you that it is true! . . .

(He is suddenly embarrassed by being so demonstrative in public.)

Thank you."

(Steps off the chest.)

I opened my eyes to see, my ears to hear, my heart to understand, and I commenced my reading of the Book of Mormon. As I did so, the Spirit bore witness to me that it was light out of darkness and truth out of the ground. Two days later, on the thirty-first of December, Azmon and I went forward in baptism. The day was glorious. The sun was shining and

(WILFORD, carried away by the happy memory of his baptism, isn't paying attention as he rummages around in his fly box. He accidentally pricks his finger on a hook.)

Oh! Ow!

(Recovering after a moment, he continues with as much dignity as he can muster.)

Apparently, I have been numbered among those who are the marked victims of misfortune. When I was three years old, I fell into a cauldron of scalding water. And although I was instantly rescued, I was so badly burned, it was nine months before I was thought to be out of danger. And then, when I was four or five, I was playing with my brothers one evening, contrary to my father's instructions, and I suddenly made a misstep and fell to the bottom of the stairs, breaking one of my arms in the fall. Well, so much for disobedience.

And then, father owned a number of horned cattle, among which was a surly bull. Well, one evening, I was feeding pumpkins to these cattle. This bull left his own and took the pumpkin I had given to a cow which I had called mine. I was incensed at the selfishness of this male beast. I promptly picked up the pumpkin he had left to give to my cow.

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(He begins to act the scene out.)

But no sooner had I got it in my arms than this bull came plunging toward me, full of fury. Well now, I ran down the hill as fast as I could, with the bull at my heels. My father called out, "Throw down the pumpkin!" But forgetting to be obedient, I held on tight. Now as that bull approached me with the fierceness of a tiger, I suddenly made a misstep and fell to the earth. The pumpkin rolled out of my arms, the bull leaped over me, ran his horns into the pumpkin, and tore it to pieces. Undoubtedly, he would've done the same thing to me had I not fallen--

(Interrupting himself as another accident comes to mind.)

When I was nine or ten, early one morning in company with several boys, I went to my father's flour mill, and I went and ! got up on the headlock of the carriage, if you know what that is, not anticipating any danger. But before I was aware, my leg was caught between the headlock and the fender post, and broken in two. It was nine hours of severe pain before the bones could--

(Interrupting himself again.)

I almost froze to death when I was thirteen. And then, when I was seventeen, I was riding upon a very ill-tempered horse, which, while going down a very steep rocky hill, suddenly leaped off the path and ran down at full speed amidst the thickest of the rocks. Now, he commenced kicking and he tried to throw me, but I lodged on the very top of his head, grabbed both his ears, and tried to guide him, 'til he plunged into a rock nearly breast-high and fell to the earth. I went over his head, landing squarely upon my feet, fifteen feet in front. Alighting upon my feet was probably the means of saving my life, for if I had struck the ground on any other part of my body, I probably--

(He is really worked up now, somehow wrought up with all his accidents.)

One day when I was chopping a tree Well, I think that you receive my meaning.

It has seemed to me at times as though some unseen power were watching my footsteps in search of an opportunity to destroy my life, for I've broken both of my legs, one of them in two places, both arms, my breastbone, and three ribs. I've been scalded, frozen, and drowned. I've been in two water wheels when they were turning under a full head. I've had a score of other hair-breadth escapes. I have not now a lame limb about me, notwithstanding it all. And I've been called upon to endure the hardest kind of manual labor, exposures, hardships, journeys. I've walked forty and fifty and, on one occasion, sixty miles in a single day. Well, I ascribe my preservation upon the earth to the watchful care of a merciful Providence. But I do have a few scars.

Now, where was I? . . . Oh, yes! Getting baptized!

(Interrupts himself, again)

Oh, while I was preparing to ride to my baptism, my horse suddenly kicked the hat from off of my head. If he had struck two inches lower ...

(He shakes his head.)

Well, when I finally arrived at the place of baptizing, there was a large number of people at the water's edge. There was about three feet of snow on the ground. When we waded into the water, it was mixed with ice. But I didn't feel the cold. When I came up out of that icy water, my soul was filled with joy unspeakable, and I truly felt that I could exclaim with the servant of God that it was better to be a doorkeeper in the House of the Lord than to dwell in tents of wickedness. I knew my life was changed forever.

(WILFORD prepares his rod and flies for fishing. He walks to the banks of the stream and makes an expert cast. Throughout the following account he fishes, casting several times.)

Have you heard of Zion's Camp? I was in Zion's Camp. It was an expedition, led by the Prophet Joseph himself, to go and rescue the Saints who were being persecuted so bad by mobs in Missouri. Now on the

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Sunday before we left Kirtland, Joseph called a priesthood meeting in a little cabin. He asked a number of us to bear testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which we did. He then arose, and he said, "Brethren, I am very much interested and edified by your testimonies, but I want you to know that you know no more concerning the results of this work and what lies before you as the Elders of Israel than a passel of little children. This work will fill the earth,"he said. "It will fill the Rocky Mountains with tens of thousands of Latter-day Saints."

(Casts.)

Zion's Camp Oh! It was a great school for us. To be led a thousand miles by a prophet of God through cities, towns, and villages. We pitched our tents at night, we had prayers night and morning. The Prophet told us every day what we should do. We were mostly young men gathered from all parts of the country and strangers to one another, but we got acquainted very soon and had a happy time together.

(Casts.)

I remember we encountered some rattlesnakes. Some of the brethren were about to kill them. Joseph said, "No, men must become harmless before the brute creation. When men lose their evil dispositions and cease to destroy the animal race, the lion and the lamb can dwell together, and the sucking child can play with the serpent in safety." I wrote that down in my journal. Well, it was just a few nights after this that Solomon Humphries fell asleep on a rattlesnake and wasn't harmed. Now, when others tried to kill it, he said, "You shan't harm him for he and I had a good nap together."

Heartened by this, I suppose, Martin Harris began to boast that he could handle serpents without fear and was therein bitten and poisoned. Joseph reprimanded him, telling him that if a man were bit accidentally he might ask in faith for the Lord to heal him, but men should not provoke miracles from the Lord.

(Casts.)

Well, as we traveled, people stood by to count us, but they could not tell how many we were, because the Lord multiplied us in their eyes. Some said 500, others 1000; we were never more than 200 or so. We did have some enemies sworn to our destruction. A man named Campbell swore

(Imitating the rough Missouri accent)

"The turkey buzzards and eagles will eat my flesh if I don't fix Joe Smith and his armies so their skins won't hold shucks before two days is out." He and eleven of his companions started across the river toward us. Mid-stream they sprang a leak and sank. Seven of the twelve were drowned.

(He casts again, and this time his line snags on a rock in the creek. He tugs on the line, but it is stuck fast.)

Now, Campbell's body lodged on a pile of driftwood and there the eagles, buzzards, ravens, crows, and wild animals ate the flesh from his bones to fulfill his own words.

(He tugs on the line again, but again to no avail.)

Well, I've got to get that fly. That's my only Royal Coachman.

(He removes his boots and socks and wades out into the "stream" to retrieve his valuable fly.)

Now, the Lord knows best. On a small elevated piece of land between the Little and Big Fishing Rivers, he began to hinder our progress. First, one wagon broke down, then another.

(He has his fly, and wades back to shore. Sitting on the chest he dries his 'feet and legs. As he puts on his socks, he notices they are different colors.)

Those don't go together, do they?

(He puts his boots on and rolls down his pants.)

As I was saying, first one wagon broke down and then another, 'til we had to stop and make camp. Well, as we were making preparations for the night, five heavily armed ruffians rode into camp, said two hundred

like them were across the river, and we ...

(imitating the Missourians)

"would see hell before mornin'."

But, as they rode out of camp, we looked up, and we beheld a small black cloud rising in the west above our enemies. Soon, the whole heavens gathered blackness. Suddenly, a mighty storm burst forth: wind, rain, oh! The incessant flashes of lightning was such that a man could see to pick up a pin at almost any time during the night. The mandate of vengeance had gone forth from the God of battles, for a mighty hail fell on them, but not on us. Our enemies found holes in their hats to match the bumps on their heads, and otherwise received damage even to the breaking of their rifle stocks and the fleeing of their horses through fear and pain. We suffered no harm except blowing down some of our tents, and getting a little wet. And mark this: if the Lord had not hindered our company, we would have crossed that river to Clay County, and we would have been at the mercy of those mobocrats. As it was, the Fishing River rose forty feet in thirty minutes, we were saved and our enemies confounded. Well, we finally pitched our tents in Missouri. But me and my accidents ... At night once, a rifle was discharged accidentally and the ball passed through four tents with one dozen men in each. No one injured, but the ball passed within a few inches of *my* breast.

Previous to this time, there had been much disobedience and harsh murmuring. Joseph said as a result of this, there was a scourge awaiting the company. Very soon the destroyin' angel visited us. Eight or ten of the Brethren were laid low under the stroke of cholera. Now, Joseph attempted to rebuke it and was therein immediately struck with the sickness himself. We were thus shown that when the Lord sends a judgment, men must not attempt to stay it. Through the night and the next morning, there were fresh attacks. Joseph said if would now humble ourselves, the scourge would be stayed and it was from that hour. Not another case.

Well, I don't know what you've heard, but we did not rescue the Saints in Missouri. We did not accomplish the work we'd come a thousand miles to fulfill. We lost some Brethren to cholera. Apparently, we came away unsuccessful. Apostates and unbelievers many times have asked me, "What have you done?" I'll tell you. We gained an experience we could not have gained in any other way. We had the privilege of beholding the face of the prophet of God, of traveling a thousand miles with him of seeing the workings of the Spirit with him. Now, I went, I did not get shot. Neither did any of the others. But we fulfilled the commandment of God, and had I not gone up with Zion's Camp, I would not be here today.

(WILFORD takes from the chest a vest, frock coat, and cravat. As he talks, he puts them on so that when he is finished dressing, he will be in more formal, but still homespun, preaching clothes.)

I knew that the gospel which the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith was true, and it seemed so good and so plain to me I thought even I could make people believe it. I wanted to preach. But I was only a teacher, and I feared to tell the authorities of tChurch lest they might think I was seeking for an office. So went out into the woods where I could be alone, and I kneeled down and I prayed to the Lord to open my way. Well, while was praying, the Spirit of the LoM told me that my request would be granted. So I arose, very happy, and I walked out of the woods into the traveled road and there I met Judge Elias Higby. No sooner had we met than Judge Higby said, "Brother Wilford, the Lord has revealed to me that it's your privilege be ordained and go preach the gospel."

"Well," I said, (as if he did not know) "I'm willing to do whatever the Lord requires of me.

So I was ordained a Priest. I was twenty-seven years old, sent on a mission to Arkansas and Tennessee with Brother Homer Brown. Now, we didn't know much about missionary work, but we did know that the direct road to Arkansas led square through Jackson County, from where the Saints had just been driven. I asked

Bishop Partridge if we should go through there. Said he,

(casually)

"Well, if you've got the faith to do it, you can do it. I haven't." Curious remark from a bishop.

I said, "Well, the Lord has said we must travel without purse or scrip. Shall we do that?"

Said he,

(Again casually)

"Well, that is the law of the Lord. If you have the faith to do it, you may."

So we packed some Books of Mormon and are clothing into valises. We strapped those to our backs, and we made our way by ferry into Jackson County.

(WILFORD walks about the stage, on his 'journey.')

Now, there were very few inhabitants in the Southern part of Missouri. One morning we crossed a thirty-mile prairie, level as a house floor, 'til we came to timber at two o'clock. As we approached the timber, a large Black Bear came out. We were not afraid, for we were on the Lord's errand, and we had not mocked the prophets as had the forty-two wicked children who said to Elijah, "Go up, thou Bald head," for which they were torn by bears. Well, the Barrow approached us.

(He watches the bear carefully.)

He set down on his haunches and he looked at us.

(All watchful pause, then relieved.)

Then, he ran away and we went on our way rejoicing.

We walked sixty miles that day. We were looked at by a bear by day and chased by wolves by night.

(He collapses on the stump.)

That was the hardest days work of my life.

(Wearily he gets up and continues walking.)

But the next morning we all rose, walked 12 miles through the rain to the house of a man named Beeman, who turned out to be one of the mob from Jackson County.

He had his family were just sitting down to breakfast. Well, it was the custom among the Missourians to ask you to eat, even if they intended to cut your throat soon as you got through. Mr. Beeman asked us to take breakfast, though he knew we were Mormons.

(WILFORD pulls up his three-legged stool, sits and pantomimes eating hungrily at the table.)

And then he commenced swearing at us. But there was a large platter of bacon and eggs and plenty of bread on the table, and his swearing did not hinder our eating. The harder he swore, the harder we ate, 'til we got our stomachs full. Then we thank him very much, and arose from the table.

(He stands.)

Last we heard of him, he was still swearing. Well, I trust the Lord will reward him for our breakfast ... and for the swearing.

In those days, it was a great treat for a missionary to come across a Mormon. We were hardly inside of Arkansas when we heard of a Mormon family named Akeman. The data been in Jackson County during the persecutions. Mr. Akeman had lost his wife there.

(Sadly.)

His five sons, all over six feet tall, had been tied up and went on their bare backs with hickory gads. I was eager to meet this Mormon family.

But while we were traveling toward Mr. Akeman's, I had a dream: an angel came to Brother Brown and me and told us we were directed by the Lord to travel in a certain straight path which was pointed out to us. We walked in it a while until we came to the door of a house which was in the middle of a high wall which we

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could not go around. I opened the door. The room was filled with serpents.

(SFX: The hissing of serpents is heard and grows louder as WILFORD he recounts his dream)

and my companion said he would not go in there. I said I would try to get through though they killed me, for the Lord had commanded it. I set 1 foot in that room; those serpents all coiled up and raise their heads at me. Now, there was one serpent much larger than the rest in the very center of the room. It raised its head nearly as high as mine and made a fling at me. At that moment, I knew nothing about the power of God could save me. Just as its fangs were about to close on me, it suddenly fell dead at my feet.

(SFX: The hissing stops abruptly.)

As did all the others. They swelled up, turned black, burst open, took fire, and were consumed before my eyes.

Well, I related my dream to my companion and told him we should see something strange. Now, I've had a great many dreams—I suppose you have too—which amount to nothing. A man needs a hot supper before he retires, or he goes to bed half worried to death, and he gets the nightmares. Chased by a bear he falls over a precipice., When he strikes the ground, he wakes up. I don't know if the Lord has anything to do with that. Last night, for instance, I dreamed I was making glasshouses out of blocks of glass two feet square.

(Chuckling.)

I don't know that the Lord had anything to do with that.

(Serious again.)

But, as has been the case in every age of the earth, whenever a man has the spirit of God, he can tell from the Lord what's just a plain, ordinary dream, and what's one he should listen to.

(Warming to the subject.)

In England, I dreamed I saw by night a river in which there were many fish. I cast a hook, and I caught some. I saw some larger ones near the shore, and I called them to. After I woke up, I knew there was much baptizing to be done soon somewhere. My dreams of fishing always mean baptizing. Now, later on in London, I had more of these dreams about serpents. I came to understand that snakes in my dream always means the devil is about to oppose me. Oh, I dreamt of fast serpents, both alive and dead in London! Serpents always mean the devil.

Well, Mr. Akeman ... we were eager to meet this Mormon family.

(He acts the scene.)

But as we arrived at his house, he received us very coldly. I saw a book of Mormon on his shelf. I said, "You have a very good book there."

"Yes," He said. "but it is a book that came from the devil!"

That opened my eyes. Well, word was sent through all the settlements for 20 miles that there were two Mormon preachers in the place. A mob was soon raised and a warning sent to us to leave immediately or we be tarred and feathered, written on a rail, *and* hanged. I soon saw where the serpents were. My companion said he wanted to leave that part of Arkansas. I said no, I'd wait to see my dream fulfilled.

Now, we were staying with an aged gentleman and his wife named Hubble living nearby who would read the book of Mormon and believed. Three times I was commanded of the Lord to go up and visit Mr. Akeman. Each time I did, he railed at me worse than the time before, when I warned him to repent. But on the last time, the Spirit of God filled me like a rushing mighty wind: "Go up and visit Mr. Akeman and again bear testimony to him." I marveled at this. I told Brother Brown. He said I might go if I wished, but he would not. I went.

(Acting the scene.)

When I arrived at Mr. Akeman's house, I found the door was opened and Mr. Akeman was walking the floor.

"Good day, Mr. Akeman. Are you well? ... Good.

"Mr. Akeman, Directed by the Lord, I've come to bear solemn testimony to you of the truthfulness of the book of Mormon and of the work of God, and of the danger of opposing this work."

With rage and indignation, he railed against me ...

(Again the hissing of serpents)

... the Church, the leaders, and I felt that house filled with awful darkness and devils. I wanted to flee out of there as Lott did when he went out of Sodom, not looking behind me. But when I turned to leave, it felt like the floor was moving under my feet, and the door seemed 100 miles away. But I managed to leave that house of blackness. And Mr. Akeman followed me out. A few yards from his house, he suddenly rushed up behind me.

(WILFORD freezes in his tracks not daring to look behind him.)

I had no doubt of his intention to kill me. And then, he suddenly fell at my feet, as though he had been struck by a thunderbolt from heaven.

(Hissing stops.)

Now, I did not look behind me,

(He walks quickly away)

... but continued walking to Mr. Hubble's, meditating on the strange dealing of God with me. Why had he sent me into the midst of such spirits to bear testimony I did not know.

(SFX: The sound of a horse approaching.)

Later on, after we began eating, I heard a horse, on the full gallop. A man rode up, called out, "Mr. Akeman is dead! Come immediately!" Well, We found all his sons in the house around his body, a-wailing in an awful manner. He was a naturally large man, but his body was swelled up, his skin looked like it was ready to bust open. He was black as anything I ever saw, black and swelled up. His family, as well as ourselves, thought it was the judgment of God upon him. I preached his funeral sermon.

(WILFORD takes to the "road" again, walking in a wide circle.)

My companion left me for Kirkland, and I took the old military road, with mud and water most of the way for 170 miles. What for?

(Happily.)

To preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, to save this generation.

I arrived in Memphis weary and hungry. I went to the best tavern in the place. I found the owner.

(Acting the scene.)

"Sir, I am a stranger here and I have no money. Could you be so kind as to keep me overnight?"

Well, he looked me up and down; remember, I've just been through 170 miles of mud.

(WILFORD imitates the heavy southern drawl of the tavern owner.)

"A preacher of the gospel, sir."

He commenced laughing. "You lookin' mighty ragged 'round the edges for a preacher." He laughed louder. But I didn't blame him. The only ministers he was acquainted with rode fine horses and carriages. They had large salaries. They wore broadcloth. They'd see the whole world sink to perdition before they'd wade through 170 miles of mud to save anybody.

Well, the landlord decided he wanted to have a little fun. He told me he would keep me overnight if I would preach. He wanted to see if I could preach. By this time, I've got little mischievous and I pleaded with him: "Oh, please, no, mister, please don't set me preachin'." But the more I played to be excused, the more determined he was that I should preach.

He took my valise; the landlady gave me an excellent supper.

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(He sits on a stool and pantomimes eating and watches the 'action' around him.)

I sat down a large hall to eat it. But as I began eating, that room began to be filled with the rich and fashionable of Memphis, Kristin broadcloth and silk, while my appearance was such as you can imagine. But when I was through, the table was carried out over the heads of the people.

(He picks up the stool and places it on top of the chest. Together they make a 'pulpit'.)

I was placed in one corner of the room with the stand having a Bible, a hymn book, and a candle on, hemmed in by one dozen men, with the landlord standing in the midst of them, grinning. There was about 500 persons gathered on this occasion—not to hear gospel sermon, of course, but to have a little fun.

(Coming forward to speak intimately to the theater audience.)

Now, how would you like this position? On your first mission, with no companion and no friend, and to preach to such a hostile congregation.

(With obvious enjoyment.)

With me, it was one of the most pleasing hours of my life!

(Returns to the pulpit and resumes the scene.)

Hymn number 153:

“Nearer My God To Thee,
nearer to thee.

E'en though it be a cross
that raises me ...”Ready?

(He commences singing.)

“Nearer My God To Thee,
nearer to ...

(He stops singing.)

Not one soul would sing a note. I said, “I have not the gift of singing, but with the Lord's help, I will both pray and preach.”

I kneel down to pray.

(He does.)

All the men in the front row dropped to their knees in mockery. I prayed to the Lord to give me his spirit and to show me the hearts of the people. I promised I would deliver whatever he would give me.

(He rises.)

I preached for an hour and a half. The lies of the congregation were opened to the vision of my mind, and I told them of their wicked deeds and of the rewards they would obtain. One by one, all the men in the front row drop their heads. Three minutes after I was through preaching, I was the only one in the room.

Now, the next day, the landlord told me if I ever came that way again, to stop at his place and stay as long as I might choose. It was one of the best sermons of my life.

(He puts the stool back on the floor and walks toward the audience.)

In the first year of my mission, I traveled 3120 miles, held 170 meetings, baptized 43 persons, 3 of whom were Campbell like preachers, assisted to baptize 20 more, confirmed 35, organized 3 branches, ordained 2 teachers and one deacon—and all as a Priest. My friends, I had the ministration of Angels while holding the office of Priest. I had visions and revelations. I traveled thousands of miles in the Lord protected me, upheld my life. A man should not be ashamed of any portion of the priesthood which he holds. God has no respect for persons in this Priesthood any further than they magnify their callings and do their duty.

When I was released from my mission in the southern states, I hastened home to Kirtland to see the splendid new Temple.

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(He looks around, awe-struck, as though in the Temple.)

I walked into the apartments in the pulpits erected for the priesthoods; I gaze on the veils and the curtains, all bespeaking the grandeur, solemnity, and order that nothing but wisdom from God could invent. In the upper room were displayed for Egyptian mummies in the book of Abraham, written by his own hand. It was a more important scene than any kings ever new or princes saw in this generation.

(Now no longer in the Temple.)

This was a time of great study in Kirtland, in what we call the School of the Prophets. I commenced boarding for \$8 a week, purchased a Latin grammar of Brother Parley Pratt, and commenced my study under the instruction of Professor Haws.

And then on January 29, I was first introduced to Ms. Phoebe Carter.

(WILFORD strikes a formal, poetry-reading the pose and recites, rather stiffly.)

If loves it pistols tender lines impart,
And angels are sent to sound your heart,
Soon from my words you'll learn, if read with care,
What my fond passion is, and how sincere.
No discords, broils, nor strikes I'll make,
But steady constant all best ways to make
You happy and the only mine,
The only one I love, my Valentine.

(He is pleased, if a trifle embarrassed.)

A poem I penned for her that Valentine's Day.

Well, marriage being an institution of God and honorable to all, I accordingly joined hands with Ms. Phoebe Whitmore Carter in April of 1837. On our wedding day, the sun in the East arose to gladden the earth and to spread o'er nature his pleasing beam, to welcome the return of delightful spring, that dreary winter might be forgot. "Vera amicitia est sempeterna." Latin.

(Pleased with himself.)

"True friendship is eternal."

Now, not entirely according to my wishes, at this time I felt inspired by the Spirit of God to take a mission to the Fox Islands, situated off the coast of the state of Maine, a country I knew nothing about. I made my feelings known to the authorities. They advised me to go.

(Somewhat reluctantly.)

So I started, just one month and one day after my wedding, in company with Elder Jonathan Hale.

Meanwhile, Phoebe was to follow later and stay with her parents in Maine.

Just before we crossed over to the Fox Islands, Phoebe and I stayed at her parents house, the first I'd ever met them. We were very kind received.

(WILFORD sets the stool on top of the chest and sits on it, as though seated in a row-boat. He pantomimes rolling with two oars.)

And one morning, I went out fishing on the sea, with Fabian and Ezra Carter, my brothers-in-law. And we saw for Wales, it being the first time in my life I had ever seen the kind of fish which is said to of swallowed Jonah.

Now, the people of the Fox islands get most of their living by fishing.; Great quantities of fish in almost endless variety inhabit their clothes and harbors Wales and blackfish, sharks, Brown sharks, pilot fish, horse mackerel, Sturgeon, salmon, halibut, cod, Pollock, Hake, skate, shrimp, squid, cusk, blue-back, scallop, Dog-fish, mutton-fish, lump fish, five-fingers, monkfish, sunfish, swordfish, thrasher, catfish, eyefish, cunner,

and ling, also yields, clams, lobster, mussels, Perry Winkle, and seals.

(WILFORD has not meant to recite the long list, but he simply thought of more and more creatures as he went along. He thinks nothing of it. He climbs off the stool and places it back on the floor.)

Well, when Elder Hale and I arrived in they Fox Islands, we went to the island church house. We found a meeting was in session. A deacon met us at the door.

(WILFORD acts out the scene.)

“Go and tell your pastor there are two servants of God at the door. They have a message to deliver to the people and wish the privilege of doing so.”

The Baptist minister, Mr. Newton, indicated for us to come to the pulpit.

(WILFORD makes his way to the pulpit).

“Excuse me ...pardon me...”

(WILFORD whispers something to the “minister”.)

My friends, we greet you in the name of the Lord. We’ve come a thousand miles to bring you a message important to your salvation. With the kind indulgence and permission of your fine pastor, we will speak to you here at Five o’clock...

(Looking to the minister for approval)

Five o’clock? ... Five o’clock this evening.”

Mr. Newton invited us home, and on the way, I asked him if there were any schoolhouses upon the island, and if so, if they were free to preach in. There were, and they were. In the first 13 days of our sojourn upon the Fox Islands, we preached 17 discourses.

I left a Doctrine and Covenants with Mr. Newton, and the Spirit of God bore testimony to him of its truthfulness, but he pondered it for a few days,

(Pacing as though he were Newton)

walking his room until after midnight, trying to decide whether to receive it or reject it.

(Stops abruptly.)

Now, he had two choices: he could receive it and lose his good name and honor among men, or he could reject it and be damned. He chose the latter. But we commenced baptizing his flock.

Some of the leading apostates in Kirtland had tried to discourage Elder hail from going on this mission, telling him he’d never baptize anyone and had better remain at home. So when it Captain Eames offered himself for baptism, I asked Elder Hale to baptize him and prove those men to be false prophets, which he did. To my knowledge, that was the first baptism performed by proper authority upon the Isles of the sea in this dispensation.

Well, Mr. Newton; he now commenced the war against us. He sent over to the South Island for a Rev. Douglas, a Methodist minister with whom he’d been at variance for years, to come over and help him put down Mormonism. They have a long meeting, which I attended. Mr. Douglas railed against the Prophet Joseph and against the Book of Mormon, and

(Acting this out)

taking that booking his hand outstretched arm, he proclaimed,

(Imitating Douglas’s pompous bass voice)

“I fear none of the judgments of God which might come upon me for rejecting this book is the word of God.”

That seems like a dangerous statement for anyone, let alone a preacher of the Lord, to make. I noted it down in my journal. At the end of his speech, I arose:

(WILFORD preaches to a "large congregation".)

"My friends. I can see Mr. Douglas appear very plainly, which is more than he can say for Joseph Smith, whom he's never seen, nor heard, nor has the slightest acquaintance with. While all men are entitled to their own opinions, even if they are uninformed and scurrilous ones, I'm sure we'd all rather hear the truth about Joseph Smith and fish stories from one who doesn't know him. He agrees me that Mr. Douglas has misquoted much Scripture that attempted to mislead you about the Letter-day Saints, so let me ask your kind permission to come back here at 10 o'clock on Sunday—as well as Mr. Douglas—at which time I will correct these false notions."

(He steps out of the scene.)

I did, and we continue to baptize. We baptized every person that had an interest in the Baptist meetinghouse. Then, we followed Mr. Douglas home to South Island, preached the gospel to the members of his congregation, and baptized nearly all of them. In order to save his case, Mr. Newton went across to the mainland, brought over several ministers, they held a protracted meeting, but all to no avail. We continued to baptize.

Now it must be said that Mr. Newton chose badly when he decided to obey the law of man rather than the law of God,

(Reluctantly)

... for he was subsequently sent up to the Thomaston Penitentiary for committee in outrage against his daughter. I merely mention this to show how the minds of some men receive the tidings of the gospel. Notices were posted up, warning us to leave town, but we thought it better to obey God than man. Therefore, we did not go. It is better to fall in the defense of truth than to disobey the words of God and to go to hell. I have never committed a sin in this church and kingdom but what it hasn't cost me 1000 times more than it was worth.

Owing to this bad feeling, some who opposed us went down to the harbor and they got a swivel cannon and some small arms, and they planted the Canon very near the schoolhouse. And while I was speaking, they commenced firing the cannon and guns.

(Loud cannon blasts are heard, forcing WILFORD to raise his voice.)

Well, I continued speaking as loud as I could for as long as I could, but my voice was drowned out by the report of musketry. So I stopped trying to preach. I told the people are garments were clear of the blood of the inhabitants of that island. I asked if anyone wish to embrace the gospel. Amidst the ordnance fire, many people said yes, and this was the music to which we held another baptism.

(Cannon fire ceases.)

Elder Hale and I were very glad for our success. We thought that our mission to the Isles of the sea was like the 16th chapter of Jeremiah: "behold, I shall send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall catch them. And afterwards I shall send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and from every hill and from out of the holes of the rocks, for mine eyes are upon all their ways."

(Obviously delighted.)

For, in the midst of this, I learned that my first child, a daughter, was born at Father Carter's house on the mainland. We named her Sarah Emma.

(Troubled by memory.)

And then I received a letter from Thomas Marsh, who was then president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, informing me that the Prophet Joseph had had a revelation about who were to fill the places of those of the Twelve who had fallen. After having the ministrations of Angels and seeing the power of God manifested, some of the apostle said, "We have served God long enough. Now were going to serve

ourselves.”

They took a stand against the prophet God raised up. And what was the result? Their power felt like lightning from the heavens. In his letter, President Marsh said, “no then, Brother Woodruff, that you are called to fill the place of one of the Twelve Apostles, and that you are to come speedily to Far West, there to take leave of the Saints and depart for other climes across the mighty deep.” The substance of this letter had been made known to me some weeks before, but I have not named it to any man.

While upon the Fox Islands, Elder Hale and I baptize nearly 100 persons. We had a great desire to take as many as we could get to Zion.

(As he remembers, a tone of concern creeps into his voice.)

But the Saints waited in Maine until very late in the season, when cold weather and fall rains encircled us. It was the greatest trial Phoebe was ever called upon to pass through: to travel 2000 miles late in the year through mud and rain and snow with the babe of two months in the first stages of the whooping cough. But Phoebe possessed too much firmness and faith and confidence in God to put her hand to the plow and that look back.

A few days after we began, Phoebe was struck with a severe headache. She grew more and more distressed until her headache turned into brain fever. I felt helpless. She continued to fail, coming very near-death.

(As though answering an unspoken question.)

I laid my hands on her. I gave her a blessing. She revived somewhat and slept some during the night, but the next day she was very low and seemed to be sinking quickly. That evening, despite anything I could do, her spirit left her body and she was dead. I bow down, and I prayed for the life of my companion.

While I was praying, CB said that her spirit looked at her body lying upon the bed, at me, and upon her babe. In the midst of this scene, 2 messengers came into the room and told her that she might have her choice. She might go to rest in the spirit world, or, upon condition that she felt she could stand by her husband in all the cares and afflictions he be called upon to pass through for the Gospels sake, She might remain. She looked at the situation of her husband and child. She said, “Yes. I will do it.”

Suddenly, the power of God rested upon me, and for the 1st time during her illness, faith filled my soul, though she lay before me dead. In the name of the Lord, I anointed her. I rebuked the power of death and the destroyer. Her spirit entered her body, and she was made whole.

(emotionally.)

And I rejoiced, for what I would have done without her, I... I don't know.

(Regaining his composure.)

Well, the Lord had called me to go preach the Gospel in foreign climes. Guess where that was? England! But before we left in 1839, we were under the necessity of settling our families. Now, we chose a place called Commerce, afterwards named Nauvoo. I settled my family, along with brother Brigham's, in old army barracks in Montrose, just across the river from Commerce. It was a very sickly time—the Saints driven out of Missouri—

(WILFORD suddenly has a sharp pang of memory, which causes him to stop his narrative. Then angrily.)

And I will not speak here of Haun's Mill and of the blood of the Saints which still stains the hands of the enemies of God.

(Regaining his composure.)

Well, they were now flocking into Commerce, you see. They were living in tents and wagons, on the ground. Many were very sick from exposure. Brother Joseph and Sister Emma had given up their home to the sick and had pitched a tent in their door yard to stay in. He waited on the ailing until he was worn out

and nearly sick himself.

One morning, Brother Joseph, in company with Sidney Rigdon and several of the twelve apostles, came by my home in Montrose. As they passed by my door, Brother Joseph said, "Brother Woodruff, follow me." That is all he or anyone else said until we got to Brother Fordham's house.

(He acts out entering Fordham's house.)

Now Elijah Fordham had been dying for one hour. Everyone expected each moment to be his last. Well, Brother Joseph walked up to Brother Fordham and took him by the right hand.

(Indicating Fordham.)

His eyes were glazed. He was speechless and unconscious. But I felt the Spirit of God overpowering his Prophet. Joseph looked into the dying man's face.

(WILFORD plays the roles of Joseph Smith and Elijah Fordham.)

He said, "Brother Fordham, do you not know me?" There was no answer. "Elijah, do you not know me?" In a very low whisper, "yes."

"Do you not have the faith to be healed?"

This time the answer was a little plainer. "I'm afraid you've come too late. If you come a little sooner, I think I might have been."

Now he had the appearance of a man awakening from sleep. It was the sleep of death. Then Joseph said, "Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ?"

"I do, Brother Joseph."

Then the prophet spoke in a loud voice, with the Majesty of Jehovah: "Elijah, I commend you in the name of Jesus of Nazareth to arise and be made whole"

the house seemed to shake on its foundation. Joseph's voice was not like the voice of man's. It was like the voice of God's. Elijah Fordham leapt from his bed. I help the color came into his face, and life was manifested in every act. His feet had been done up in Indian meal poultices. He kicked those off, scattering the contents and called for his clothes. He asked for a bowl of bread and milk, and he ate it. Then he clapped his hat onto his head and followed us into the street to visit others who were sick.

(WILFORD "leaves" the house.)

And this was not all. A man of the world, hearing of this miracle, came up to Brother Joseph, ask him to heal his twin children about 5 months old, who were lying I am to death some 2 miles from Montrose. The Prophet said he could not go, and then after a long pause, he turned to me. He said, "Brother would rough, you go with this man and heal his children."

Well, the Prophet had arisen that morning, called upon the Lord, and healed all on both sides of the river in great power.

(incredulously)

And now he turns to me?! He took from his pocket a red silk handkerchief, and she gave it to me. He told me to what faces of the children as I administered to them. He also said, "So long as you keep this handkerchief, it will be a league between you and me." Well, I went with the man. I did as the prophet commanded me.

(WILFORD reverently removes the red handkerchief from an inner coat pocket. Handling the handkerchief triggers the strong emotions welling up inside him. He remains so, clutching the handkerchief, through the farewell to his wife.)

And the children were healed.

(He will continue to clutch the handkerchief, and it will be difficult for him to speak through the farewell to Phoebe.)

PERUSAL SCRIPT-- God's Fisherman -- by Tim Slover & James Arrington

When it came time for me to leave for England, both Phoebe and I were sick. I laid my hands on her and I gave her a blessing.

(He sits on the chest with Phoebe "lying" next to him.)

"Phoebe, farewell. Be of good cheer. Remember me in your prayers, especially as the sun sets in the western horizon. I shall see thy face again in the flesh. I am gone to obey the command of Jesus Christ." I left her, almost without food of the necessities of life. But she parted from me with a firmness that becomes a Latter-day Saint, knowing the responsibility of her companion.

I made my way to New York to await the other brethren who were to sail for England, and it was there that I had a peculiar dream. I saw Phoebe, and notwithstanding we rejoiced at having an interview with one another, still our embraces were mixed with sorrow for after conversing a while I asked her where Sarah Emma was, our only child. She said, weeping and kissing me, "She's dead." We sorrow in a while and I awoke. Was this dream true? I wondered. I didn't know. But sometimes this gift of... of dreams...

(His emotions do not allow him to continue. He stands fighting for composure.)

... Well, I'd just look to Brother Brigham. Often he won't call out. I hate for him to suffer alone. I'll return presently.

(He walks quickly offstage.)

INTERMISSION

12 more pages comprise Act Two

