

# THE INFLUENCE OF MORMON THOUGHT AND PRACTICE IN THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY AREA UPON THE COLONIZATION OF THE GREAT BASIN

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While historians have given some attention to the fact that ideas developed in the Mississippi Valley Area have influenced the colonization of the West, they have failed to note that this particularly true in areas settled by the Latter-day Saints (Mormons). Mormonism, as a socio-economic, religious, and political system, was almost developed before its westward exodus under the leadership of Brigham Young. It was Joseph Smith, not Brigham Young, who set the mold of Mormon religious, social, economic, and political doctrines and practices. The forms and practices used in colonizing the Great Basin were largely developed in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois.

Priesthood doctrine and practice, in this system where all things centered in the Priesthood and its law, were developed and set before the exodus from Illinois. There, Joseph Smith also organized what became the National Women's Relief Society, which united the female population among the Latter-day Saints behind the task of subduing the desert. Sunday schools, later developed by the Mormons the West, had their origin among the saints while at Kirtland, Ohio. A youth organization that undoubtedly would have developed into the modern religious recreational program among Latter-day Saints, had it not been disrupted by the exodus, was organized by Smith at Nauvoo, Illinois in 1843. And the Primary Association, as organized in the Great Basin, found its basis in statements by Joseph Smith on the need of educating children.<sup>1</sup>

Mormon practices go back to Ohio and Missouri. Concepts on marriage and the family, including the practice of plural, marriage back to Joseph Smith and the pre-Brigham Young era. Mormon ideas on city, including the idea wide streets coming together on the square, were developed initially in Ohio and Missouri and thereafter in Illinois and throughout the great Basin.<sup>2</sup> The planning of such cities at strategic points throughout the West found precedence in Missouri, where cities were laid out in favorable locations under the direction of the Mormon Prophet.<sup>3</sup>

Brigham Young's inspiration to colonize the Great Basin coincided with similar inspiration and planning by Joseph Smith before his in 1844. In August, 1842, the latter "prophesied that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction, and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains" where they would become "a mighty people." Under date of February 20, 1844, he reported: "I instructed the Twelve Apostles to send out a delegation and investigate the location of California and Oregon, and hunt out a good location where we can build a city in a day, and have a government of our own."<sup>5</sup> He also made an unsuccessful attempt shortly before his death to get the Federal government to permit him to raise 100,000 troops "to explore the unexplored regions of our continent" and assure the orderly colonization of the West by the American home-builder.<sup>6</sup> Finally, consideration was given to a plan to colonize the region between the Nueces and the Rio Grande rivers Texas by at least a portion of the Latter-day Saints.<sup>7</sup>

But after considering this plan, Joseph Smith decided upon the settlement of the Great Basin and expressed his views on such a move on more than one occasion immediately prior to his death.<sup>3</sup>

A historical fact almost completely overlooked by historians is that Joseph Smith, not only spoke of the coming move to the Great Basin, but he set up the organization that later put his plans into effect. This organization was political rather than religious by nature. According to Mormon thought, it was the nucleus of a political system that would one day govern the earth; it was the municipal department of the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God was to include both a church and a state. Both organizations were to be directed by priesthood authority, but in a functionary way be separate and distinct from each other. Non-members of the Mormon faith, as well as members, could hold office in the newly envisioned state. The Constitution of the United States, with its guarantee to preserve the inalienable rights of all men, was to be the basic organ of government in the new order. Joseph Smith and his associates held that the Founding Fathers were inspired of God in framing this document.

Like the Founding Fathers, the Mormons believed in a stable, secure and just government, uncontrolled by political parties. To achieve this ideal in the kingdom of God, the Mormon prophet

proposed placing the power to nominate men to public office in appropriate priest of the councils. Following such nominations, the people were to have the option of freely consenting to or rejecting such nominations. After being duly installed in office, a given officer was to be governed by the covenants and by-laws of that office in dispensing impartial justice to all men. With this theocratic innovation, constitutional government was to be restored to the ideal sought by the Founding Fathers and expanded by accession throughout the world.<sup>9</sup> Said Brigham Young, as he and his company approached the Rocky Mountains

Most of this camp belong to the Church, nearly all; and I mould say to you brethren, and to the Elders of Israel, if you are faithful, you will yet be sent to preach this Gospel to the nations of the earth and bid all welcome whether they believe the gospel or not, and this kingdom will reign over many who do not belong to the Church, over thousands who do not believe in the Gospel. Bye and bye every knee shall bow and every tongue confess and acknowledge and reverence and honor the name of God and ills priesthood and observe the laws of the kingdom whether they belong to the Church and obey the Gospel or not, and I mean that every man in this camp shall do it. That is what the Scripture means by every knee shall bow, etc., And you cannot make anything else of it.<sup>10</sup>

Joseph Smith held that the world stood critically in need of a reorientation of its existing forms of society toward greater union and brotherhood. Among other things, the proposed reorientation espouse the idea of a world government capable of promoting peace and securing to all men their inalienable rights. Should the world reject his proposal, he held that a period of international conflict would develop that would eventually "make a full end of all nations."<sup>11</sup> Then, if not before, conscientious men of all face throughout the world would see the need of embracing his proposed system of government.

The move west was undertaken to establish the foundation upon which the kingdom of God in its fullness could eventually rest.<sup>12</sup> latter-day Saints believed that there's I and had to be built upon and become "independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world" in order to withstand the coming "tribulation" and cope with the task of building the New World order.<sup>13</sup>

While the world was free to accept or reject their proposal, it was the duty of the Saints to go ahead with the work of establishing the kingdom of God to the extent of their powers. To fulfill this responsibility and to facilitate the coming move to the west, Joseph Smith commenced the organization of the political Oregon to be associated with the church in the after kingdom the new organ was brought into being March 11, 1844.

Brigham Young reported that it had as is immediate task the responsibility of determining "the best manner to settle our people in some distant and unoccupied territory; where we could enjoy our civil and religious rights, without being subject to constant oppression and mobocracy, under the protection of our own laws, subject to the Constitution."<sup>14</sup>

Instead of seeking to disassociate themselves from the United States Constitution, the Mormons sought to organize their own form of government within its broad and liberal provisions. The Kingdom of God as a world government would only be launched by the free cooperation of others either before or after the coming period of international conflict. Meanwhile, they had a job to do; and they invited others to assist in the following proclamation made by the Quorum of the Twelve in 1847:

Come then, ye Saints; come then, the honorable men of the earth; then ye wise, ye learned, ye rich, ye double, according to the riches and wisdom, and the knowledge of the great Jehovah; from all nations, the face of the whole earth, and join the standards of the Emmanuel, and help us to build up the Kingdom of God, and establish the and it pertained of truth, life, and salvation.....

The kingdom of God consists in correct principles: and it matter if not what a man's religious faith is: whether he be a Presbyterian, or a Methodist, or a Baptist, or a latter-day saint or a "Mormon," or a Catholic or Episcopalian or Mohammed and, or even pagan, or anything else, if he will bow the knee and with his tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ, and will support good and wholesome laws for the regulation of society,--we hail him as a brother, and will stand by him while he stands by us in these things; for every man's religious faith is a matter between his own soul and his God alone: but if he shall deny Jesus, if he shall curse God, if he shall indulge in

debauchery and drunkenness, and crime; if he shall live, and swear, and steel; if he shall take the name of the Great God in vain, they commit all matters of abominations, you shall have no place in our midst.....<sup>15</sup>

The new organ attained a membership of approximately 50 men during the lifetime of Joseph Smith. Though the prophet designated it a "Special Council" on the day it was organized<sup>16</sup> he later termed it the "General Counsel" sometimes abbreviated as the "Council."<sup>17</sup> another popular name by which it was known was the "Council of 50." No doubt this name was derived from the number of its initial members. Since the Council was considered as the nucleus of the political kingdom, it was also at times referred to as the "Council of the Kingdom."<sup>18</sup>

There are several notations in Brigham Young's journal indicating the efforts made by the General Counsel to organize for the coming exodus to the West. On March 8, 1845, the Council met all day.<sup>19</sup> four days later they met again and among other things "the subject of the Western mission was considered and occupied most of the day."<sup>20</sup> Other meetings followed; on September 9, in 1845, the General Council "resolve that a company of 1500 men be selected to go to Salt Lake Valley and that a committee of five be appointed to gather information relative to the immigration, and report the same to the Council."<sup>21</sup> the forced exodus of the Saints from Nauvoo later altered these plans.

The Council met at the Seventies Hall in Nauvoo on September 30, 1845, and Parley P. Pratt reported that he had made a calculation for an outfit that every family of five persons would require.<sup>22</sup> A more complete report on this subject was made at the October 4 meeting. On that date a committee placed before the Council a detailed estimate of such needs, taken "from the best works on the subject."<sup>23</sup>

In carrying out their plans, the General Council commenced by organizing the Saints into companies for the Westward journey. Said the Journal History by way of retrospect;

When it was decided that the Saints would remove from Nauvoo, about twenty-five men were selected by the General Council and called captains of hundreds, whose business it was

severally to select 100 families and see that they were prepared for their journey across the rocky mountains; afterwards the captains of hundreds selected their own captains of fifties, and tens, clerks, etc.

Here again Joseph Smith, not Brigham young, set the mold. A cannel comparison of the organization of Zion's Camp with the later organization used by Brigham young in the westward track indicates that the latter was copied from the structure originated by the Mormon prophet, when he formed an expedition and marched from Kirtland, Ohio to Missouri in an effort to reap locate the scattered Saints in Missouri upon their lands in Jackson County. All that expedition and its influence upon himself, Brigham Young later wrote:

I have travelled with Joseph a thousand miles... I have watched him and observe everything he said or did. . . .For the town of Kirkland I would not give the knowledge I got from Joseph from this journey; and then you may take the state of Ohio and the United States, and I would not give that knowledge for them. It has done me good and you good and this was the starting point of my knowledge of how to lead Israel. I watched every word and summed it up, and I knew just as well how to lead this kingdom as I know the way to my own house. Is a God with in me, and a God upon me: God by day and by night, and it is for this kingdom on the earth.<sup>25</sup>

On the date of October 11, 1845, Brigham Young reported that, "The council met at Elder John Taylor's in Nauvoo. The brethren joined in prayer, and wrote a circular for the ages to take abroad with them."<sup>26</sup> This circular was concerned with the exodus West. That evening the Council,

. . . appointed additional captains of hundreds, making twenty-five companies, as follows; 1st, the Twelve, 2nd if hello yes I New England thank you, Samuel Bent; 3<sup>rd</sup>, Alpheus Cutler; 4<sup>th</sup>, Isaac Morley; 5<sup>th</sup>, Shadrach Roundy; 6<sup>th</sup>, Reynolds Cahoon; 7<sup>th</sup>, Daniel Spencer; 8<sup>th</sup>, Peter Haws; 9<sup>th</sup>, Joseph Fielding; 10<sup>th</sup>, John D. Parker; 11<sup>th</sup>, David Fullmer; 12<sup>th</sup>, Charles Shummay; 13<sup>th</sup>, Charles C. Rich; 14<sup>th</sup>, Jedediah M. Grant; 15<sup>th</sup>, Erastus Snow; 16<sup>th</sup>, Benjamin F. Johnson, 17<sup>th</sup>, Andrew H. Perkins; 18<sup>th</sup>, George Coulson; 19<sup>th</sup>, David Evans; 20<sup>th</sup>, Danial

C. Davis; 21<sup>st</sup>, Johathan H Hale; 22<sup>nd</sup>, George P. Dykes, (Ottoway); 23<sup>rd</sup>, Mephiboseth SIRRINE (Michigan); 24<sup>th</sup>, Hosen Stout; 25<sup>th</sup>, Wm. Huntington.<sup>27</sup>

On January 11, 1846, Brigham Young reported that, "The General Council met and range to make an early start West."<sup>28</sup> Another meeting was held in the temple on the 13th. According to the diary of Hosea Stout, this meeting was held by the Council of Fifty; and "the subject of our removal west was discussed and . . . Well entertained."<sup>29</sup> Concerning what then took place, Brigham Young reported: "The captains of fifties and tens made reports of the number of their respective companies, who were prepared to start West immediately, should the persecutions of our enemies compel us to do so; one hundred and fifty horses and seventy wagons were reported ready for immediate service."<sup>30</sup> On January 19th, Hosen Stout reported another meeting of the Council of Fifty, held in the temple. "It was there decided, among other things "emigrating companies should arrange and prepare as many of their families" as ready for the journey."<sup>31</sup> There may be an error in Stout's data, as Brigham Young reported that on the 19th the Temple was used for purposes which may have prevented a meeting of the Council there on that date. On the 18th, however Young reported:

A meeting of the captains of Immigrating Companies was held in the attic story of the Temple, to ascertain the number ready and willing to start should necessity compel our instant removal, being aware that evil is intended towards us, and that our safety alone will depend upon our departure from this place, before our enemies shall intercept and prevent our going.

A general interest in the movement was manifested by the whole counsel, every man felt willing to yield to the circumstances that surrounded us, and let their property be used for the purpose of accomplishing the removal and salvation of this people.

We selected Almon W. Babbitt, Joseph L. Heywood, John S. Fullmer, Henry W. Miller and John M. Bernhisel, a committee to dispose of our property and effects and eight such in immigrating as many have to go, it was agreed that they should have letters of authority to authorize them to act for us legally.<sup>32</sup>

When the exodus commenced, the initial organization

affected by the General Council was revised. Reorganizations occurred along the way, first, at Sugar Creek, about 7 miles west of Nauvoo. Hear Brigham young explained: "The former organization will have nothing to do with our arrangements or traveling on the road. It was only designated to start the order and to organize the people that they might grow into the order that would be." The next major reorganization took place at Richmond's point, about fifty-five miles from Nauvoo.<sup>34</sup> John D. Lee reported, that the "Council" made the decision to affect this reorganization.<sup>35</sup> Then, after the pioneers had arrived at the Chariton River, still another reorganization was carried out.<sup>36</sup>

One such reorganization was apparently accompanied by difficulties that arose along the way. William Clayton, as clerk of the camp, reported the following, under date of March 23, 1846:

In counsel with Brigham [Young], Heber [C. Kimball], and others. We found that [George] Miller's company hadn't gone still further about 8 miles instead of waiting till we overtook them so that we could organize. I wrote a letter to him saying if they did not wait or return to organize, the camp would organize without and they be disfellowshipped.<sup>37</sup>

On Thursday, March 26, Clayton also wrote to James Emmitt company, probably concerning the same general topic. The following morning he reported: "This morning wrote another letter to P. P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, George Miller telling them they must wait for us or come back to organize." The letter bearer met the above men, with John K, returning to the main body of Saints that day. At 1:00 p.m. the Council met. Said Clayton:

The brother in plead[ed] that the charges in the letters were unjust. They had not striven to keep out of the way but had done all for the best. The whole camp accordingly was organized, A. P. Rockwood over 1st 50; Stephen Markham, 2nd 50; [Brigham] Young, 3rd 50; Howard E. Kimball, 4th 50; Charles C. Rich, 5th 50, Charles Crimson, 6th 50. Each 50 had also appointed a contacting Commissary for the purpose of contracting for work and grain as follows: Henry Sherwood 1<sup>st</sup> 50; David H. Kimball 2<sup>nd</sup>; Wm. H. Edwards 3<sup>rd</sup>; Peter Haws 4<sup>th</sup>; Joseph Worthen 5<sup>th</sup>; Samuel Gully 6<sup>th</sup>. It was understood that I continue to preside over the band and in the absence of Brother Haws over the whole fifty. After this there was appointed for

each 50 a distributing company to distribute feed in As follows: Charles Kennedy for 1<sup>st</sup> 50; J. M. Grant 2<sup>nd</sup> 50; Nathan Tanner 3<sup>rd</sup> 50; Arson B. Adams 4<sup>th</sup> 50; James Allred 5<sup>th</sup> 50; Isaac Allred 6<sup>th</sup> 50. The brother and then gave the following instructions for the whole camp with orders that that same be observed hereafter, viz. no man to set fire to prairies. No man to shoot off a gun in camp without orders. No man to go hunting unless he is sent and all to keep guns, swords and pistols out of sight. There was then appointed a clerk for each 50 as follows: John D. Lee Young, 1<sup>st</sup> 50; John Pack 2<sup>nd</sup> 50; Lorenzo Snow 3<sup>rd</sup> 50; Geo. H. Hales 4<sup>th</sup> 50; John Oakley 5<sup>th</sup> 50; A. Lathrop 6<sup>th</sup> 50. The Council then adjourned to meet at Shariton [sic] Ford camp on Monday at 10 a.m..<sup>38</sup>

Consistent with the purpose for which it was organized, the General Council, said Benjamin Avenue. Johnson, directed "all general movements relating to our Exodus as a people from Nauvoo."<sup>39</sup> It met frequently during the early. Of the Exodus, George Miller stating that, "while we were camped on Sugarcreek there was hardly a night without a Council."<sup>40</sup> Brigham Young's clerk and adopted son John D. Lee, Minutes of several of these meetings during the early stages of the Exodus. He specifically identifies some of these meetings as having been held by the Council of Fifty. Although he merely designates the meeting held at Sugar Creek as having been held by "the Council," the minutes indicate beyond reasonable doubt that they were meetings of the general counsel. To quote the minutes of one such meeting, held February 22, 1846:

... Sunday at 10 morn. In the forenoon Chas. C. Rich who had the day previous been appointed to look after the grain and provider , reported as follows -- to the council: I have obtained about 350 bushels of corn and Oates on typing ...

2<sup>nd</sup>, the subject of policy of economy was up before the council and decided that the camp should be called together and they be instructed to stop using such articles as will be most suitable to take on the road -- such things as flour, dried beans, crackers, sugar, dried beef and pork – and use cornmeal, fresh beef, potatoes, etc., which are articles that are plenty and easy obtained and will not keep as long and be as convenient on the road as the articles mentioned.

3<sup>rd</sup>, J. D. Lee, by request of Willard Richards, presented a bill of tin brought into the camp by Wm. F Cahoon (before the council) amounting to \$53.00 and some cents, which he proposed to sell by wholesale at a discount of 15 per cent. The Council decided that he, R. Rockwood and Jay. D. Lee go and examine the tin and ascertain whether they are the articles that this camp needs or not . . .

4<sup>th</sup>, this Council [decided] that all reports of corn, grain, provisions, wagons, teams, etc. be handed to Jay. D. Lee.

5<sup>th</sup> Meeting adjourned [until] 4 eve.<sup>41</sup>

The minutes of the second meeting of the Council that day he also indicated that it was an established body set up to direct the activities of the pioneers in all matters pertaining to the move west. Lee wrote:

At the time previously appointed [i.e. 4:00 p.m.] council convened period Bro. Isaac Fuller's case was laid before the council and was decided that he should return and settle up his business and bring the avails of his property to assist the camp, -- instructing him to pass by the way of Nauvoo and counsel Pres. Br. Young on the subject -- as he might have arranged matters that would materially change the face of our movement.

2<sup>nd</sup>, The pioneers were instructed through the messenger (John Gleason) that was sent to Capt. Markham to shell 100 bushels of corn and have it ground for the benefit of the camp -- in connection with 300 bushels of wheat [that] was ordered to be sent by Pres. B. Young.

3<sup>rd</sup>, it was moved, seconded, and carried that party the. Pratt and Amass Lyman be sent with the faith and prayers of this council to visit the members on this side of the river and obtain all the oxen and wagons that they can for the journey -- after which the meeting closed. Party P. Pratt, Pres., John. D. B. Clerk.<sup>42</sup>

When it came to directing when and in what course the camp should move, the General Counsel also took the initiative. On February 23, 1846, Lee reported the following:

The council convened at 10 morning in Elder Willard Richards tent Pres. Brigham Young took the chair and organize the Council . . . Pres. B. Young observed at the Council was called together to consult the best route for us to travel; and

after deliberating upon the subject, it was decided that the best road and most convenient at this season of the year was to keep on the line between Iowa and Mo., it being settled, which would afford opportunity of purchasing food for both ourselves and teams. Next, shall we wait for Bishop Whitney or let him follow on. Decided that we prosecute our journey as soon as the weather should moderate, to some point where we can call it hauled for a season. 4<sup>th</sup>. Let Capt. Stephen Markham take a part of his Pioneers and go ahead and look out a camping ground where we can get feed for the stock -- and return and report to us. Let Capt. Samuel Bent take 50 wagons and follow on. This being attended to, Council closed. Brigham Young Pres. John D. We, clerk.<sup>43</sup>

When the camp reached the Chariton River, the Council again met, March 30, 1846. Clayton reports their decisions at that meeting as follows:

It was decided to change our route and take a more northern one to avoid the settlements. We will go to grand River and their enclose a space of land about two miles square and put up some twenty log houses for a resting place for the companies. A company starts out in a day or two to seek out the location amongst whom are the president, Heber C. Kimball and others of the twelve. A company will also be sent West to Judge Miller's to go to work for feed, etc.<sup>48</sup>

When the General Council met the following Saturday, again only part of its members were present. In reporting that a meeting, Lee again reported two of the Quorum of Twelve and who else of the Council of Fifty were present:

Sat. Apt. 18, 46. Pleasant Point Encampment. Council convened in the grove west of the encampment at 10 a.m. present of the 12: Pres. B. Yong, H. C. Kimball, John Taylor, P. P. Pratt, and Willard Richards. Of the Council of the Fifty -- Bishop Whitney, C. Miller Wm. Clayton, John Smith, Samuel Bent, J. M. Grant, C, Shumway, Theodore Turley, P. B. Lewis, E. Snow, J. D. Lee and Peter Haws, and a member of the commanders of companies.

Pres. Young said that unless our hands can be united it will be utterly impossible for us to proceed on over the mountains their hands as they have been since we started --

the teams that work turned out for the benefit of the church have been smuggled by individuals and have been converted to the removing of their own families and thereby have clogged the wheels. It now remains for the Council to say who shall go over the mountains. It was moved by Capt. such as shall go and not the Council. The Pres. said, If you leave it to me I will say that everyone that can fit out may go.<sup>49</sup>

The council then turned its attention to more immediate problems. The captains of tens were directed to make a study of the physical needs of their people and report the situation to their respective companies, that the wants of the people might be satisfied so far as it was possible. Agents were dispatched to trade with the nearby settlers. Finally, after acting on other similar matters, the artillery company was directed to prepare seats in the Grove near Brigham Young's encampment, that the states might gather for worship the next day.<sup>50</sup>

The above meeting adjourned to meet again Monday, April 20, but Clayton reports that on the evening of the 19<sup>th</sup> he "went to counsel and read many letters and wrote one to Elder Orson Hyde.<sup>51</sup> when the Council convened on Monday, Lee states that Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Parley P. Pratt, John Taylor, and Willard Richards of the Quorum of the Twelve were present. Others present of the Council of Fifty included Newel K. Whitney, George Miller, Jedediah M. Grant, Peter Haws, Benjamin F. Johnson, John Smith, Charles Spencer, John D. Lee, and to others not clearly identified. Reports were read from several companies, giving the account of their circumstances and problems. Request by several persons to return to Nauvoo for given reasons were considered and instructions issued to counsel such persons to stay and plant a crop and promote the work in the area of their camp.<sup>52</sup>

Besides stating that several letters were Clayton reports the following business:

A report was read of all those who were able to fit themselves for the mountains. A law was made on motion of Pres. Young that any person who interrupts the council hereafter by talking or otherwise, shall be deprived of the privilege of the councils till the council sees proper to admit him. The public teams being brought together, the bishop took a list of them to be disposed of at Grand River.<sup>53</sup>

The Council was again in session during the evening of April 26. The letter from Orson Hyde in Nauvoo containing information that the Church had been offered two hundred thousand dollars for the Temple at Nauvoo was read and considered, but they postponed making a decision on the matter till next morning. After this matter had been discussed, "The Council selected one hundred men to make rails, forty-eight to build houses: twelve to dig wells; ten to build a bridge" and the rest to go to farming.<sup>54</sup>

Following a meeting at 6:00 a.m. the next day, where work assignments were made to the camp, the Council again met. Of their decision regarding the sale of the Temple, Clayton wrote:

. . . It was voted to sell the Temple, signifying as to the reason, it will be more likely to be preserved. It is as lawful to sell it to help the poor Saints as to sell our inheritance. We do it because we are compelled to do it. I was ordered to write an answer to Elder Hyde's letter which I did, saying finally, if the Temple was sold, \$25,000 must be sent for the benefit of the camp. The balance to be left at the disposal of Elder Hyde, [Wilford] Woodruff and the trustees and to be appropriated to help away those who have labored hard to build the Temple and the faithful pour of the saints.<sup>53</sup>

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When those available of the General Council met on April 29, 1846, attention was centered upon their newly designated campground. The settlement "was called by the President Garden Grove." The name was then submitted to the Council and sanctioned by the same.<sup>56</sup>

A few days later another settlement further west was contemplated; and "a convention of the Council"<sup>57</sup> met during the evening of May 3<sup>rd</sup> to discuss the subject. Lee reports that President Young suggested the propriety of sending two or three men to the north to select a place for a settlement. Accordingly, the Council decided "that Pres. Young and select a place for a settlement. Clayton confirms Lee's report, but is in error and that he states that the new settlement was to be located southwest of Garden Grove. He noted that Orson Pratt and Henry C. Sherwood where the two men chosen to seek out the new campsite,<sup>59</sup> later to be known as Mount Pisgah.

As the move to Mount Pisgah got underway, organizational problems were created. On May 10th Samuel Bent was appointed "to preside over those left on his arm," with David Fullmer and Ezra T. Benson as counselors. "P. P. Pratt was advised to start as soon as possible for Platte River to take all who were prepared to go."<sup>60</sup> Two days later the Council substituted the name of Aron Johnson for that of Ezra T. Benson in the above position.<sup>61</sup>

Lee's report of this meeting is in harmony with that of the Journal History. In addition, he specifically designated those of the General Council who were present, including the apostles and bishops, who were also members.<sup>63</sup>

During the meeting the Council "chattered on various subjects--mostly on the expedition for the mountains." Kimball remarked that to proceed as they were would result in failure. Too many difficulties were being placed in the way of the leading men. Pratt suggested that they use their authority to get the necessary teams to move themselves and others who are ready to the mountains. Smith stated that he was willing to give up his team and stay until President

Young's families were removed.

As the discussion continued, the consensus of opinion seem to be that President Young go and such others as he might select; whereupon he stated that he was willing to stay and let those go over the mountains who were ready, but that they should have two go and make improvements or stay and assist others to go. After further discussions,

Elder Kimball made a motion to the effect that the Twelve stay here and let those who are ready to go on. The motion was seconded by Dr. Richards. Pres. Young moved that the Twelve and such others as they might select should go over the mountains; carried.<sup>64</sup>

As the exodus progressed, the Plans of the council were disrupted by the call for the Mormon Battalion. Here again the General Council played the leading role in making the decision to abide by the request and in recruiting the necessary men, Said George Miller:

Brigham called a council; I did not attend. 'The result of their deliberations was that they should enlist a battalion for one year's term of service, the men to be then mustered out of service, with permission to retain their arms, and they stipulated that such mustering out of service should take place at San Francisco.<sup>65</sup>

Although Miller does not specify that the above meeting was held by the General Council, Benjamin F. Johnson states that such was the case. With reference to the council he said;

To show you that I did know the motive of President Young in sending the Battalion, I will say, that I was on of that special council organized by the Prophet . . . .

I use present at the arrival of Colonel Little and company at Garden Grove, with the requisition, by count for five hundred volunteers for the American Army . . . It was well understood at the time, as the subject was fully ventilated by the Council.<sup>66</sup>

The decision to enlist the Battalion was evidently made by the members of the council who had then reached Council Bluffs. William Clayton and possibly others who were scattered out over the trail were not among those who met at the time. Clayton arrived in time for a council meeting July 12<sup>th</sup>. The following day a meeting of the whole camp was held to recruit the necessary men. "They got

three companies of 43 each and half of the fourth company,” Clayton reported.<sup>67</sup>

During the meeting a motion was made and passed unanimously “that President Young and his Council nominate the officer’s as far as he thinks proper.” This proposal was carried out at a meeting of the council at 5 p.m. Then, “about six p.m. the Council, Captain James Allen, Colonel Thomas L. Kane and a large party of the Saints assembled inside the bowery and danced to the music of the band till dark.”<sup>68</sup>

The call for the Mormon Battalion and the time it took to recruit and Organize it prevented the council from sending a company west that year.<sup>69</sup>

The matter being settled, they set about preparing to organize and establish the saints in preparation for the coming winter. On July 21, 1846 William Clayton reported:

Went to council at Elder Pratt's camp. The council appointed a council of twelve i.e. a High Council to preside here Council Bluffs viz. Isaac Moreley, Geo. W. Harris, James Allred, Thos. Grover, Phineas Richards, Herman Hyde, Wm. Peck, Andrew H. Perkins, Henry W. Miller, Daniel Spencer, J. H. Hales and John Murdock.<sup>70</sup>

The above High Council we no doubt given civil and religious authority. Clayton notes that they were “to watch over the church, establish schools for the winter, etc.”<sup>71</sup> This is one among other examples where little effort was made to distinguish between civil and ecclesiastical lines of authority. Since those in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were the leading men in the General Council, both religious and civic responsibilities could be controlled by the council.

Final arrangements for moving west to the Rocky Mountain were made at Winter Quarters. To this end a series of meetings was held by the General Council. Beginning on Christmas day, 1846. The following day two sessions were held, the first convening at 10:00 a.m. and the last concluding at 9:00 p.m. Members of the council again met the morning of the 27th.<sup>72</sup> George Miller later gave his version of what happened at that time, as follows:

Part of the teams we sent down to Missouri, having stayed longer than I had anticipated, and Brigham Young having sent an express to me to meet them in council at winter

quarters, and bring James Emit with am (as he had also in Joseph Smith's life-time been organized into the council of the fifty Princes of the Kingdom), and not to fail in coming, as important matters were to be taken up in the said council for their deliberation and my son Joshua not having yet returned from Missouri, where he had gone with others to purchase grain, I altered my mind and concluded to go, and, after the counseling should have ended, helped my son home to Ponca Village. . . . Emit and I set off . . . when we arrived at the winter quarters, the council convened, but their deliberations amounted to nothing. However, I was not wholly overlooked in their deliberations. Brigham Young, Kimball and Richards proposed that I should come down to Winter Quarters, bringing with me part of my family, and take my place With Bishop Whitney in managing the fiscal concerns of the Church, and that I should be supported out of the revenues of the church; which, however, was not done, This council, originally consisting of fifty-three members, of whom some twenty had gone on missions, or were by deaths and other means absent, was now swelled to a great crowd under Brigham's reign.<sup>73</sup>

On January 4, 1847, Brigham Young wrote to Charles C. Rich at Mount Pisgah, informing him of the decisions of the Council. Said he:

Our council met at Christmas and decided to send on a pioneer company as early as possible with plows, seed, grain, etc., and make preparations for eatables at the foot of the mountain, on this side; and when the grass starts we will follow on with as many as can go, or as many as it is wisdom to go and be sustained at that point, for we consider it best so far as practicable to raise grain ahead instead of carting it; as we have before said to you we shall want to gather up all the able bodied men who can leave, to go in the pioneer company, and we expect soon to send a delegation to your place to explain all particulars accompanied probably by some of the Twelve<sup>74</sup>

To better facilities the coming moves, Brigham Young gave the "Word and Will of the Lord," in January, 1847, setting forth the organization to be followed in moving the saints west. It is noteworthy that the General Council, along with the several bodies of priesthood in the Church, voted to acknowledge and abide by it. Said Lee:

. . . in council with the Twelve at E. T. Benson's when the

word and will of the Lord concerning the journeyings of Israel was first laid before the council as a revelation to the church and acknowledged by the Council of Fifty. The revelation was then presented to the First Presidency of the Seventies and so on down and acknowledged.<sup>75</sup>

Since the pioneer company that broke the path to the mountains consisted of many but not all members of the General Council, that body was unable to meet together for some time. This temporary suspension of its meetings was anticipated; and no doubt for this reason Elder Clayton wrote in his Journal that he delivered to Brigham Young "the records of the K. of G. [Kingdom of God]."<sup>76</sup>

During the final trek to the Great Basin, Clayton reported but two matters concerning the General Council. The first was Brigham Young's reference to the ideal for which they sought in going west, already cited in this paper. Clayton's second reference to the General Council is a report of a prayer circle held by those in the pioneer company who were members of that body. Said Clayton:

. . . all the members of the council of the K. of G. in the camp, except Brother Tomas Bullock, went onto the bluffs and selecting a small, circular, level spot surrounded by bluffs and out of sight, we clothed ourselves in the priestly garments and offered up prayer to God for ourselves, this camp and all pertaining to it, the brother in very Army, for families and all the Saints, President Young being mouth. We all felt well and glad for this privilege. The members of the above counsel are Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, Orson Pratt, George a. Smith, Wilford Woodruff, Amos Lyman, Izra T. Benson, Phineas H. Young, John Peck, Charles Shumway, Shadrach Roundy, Albert R. Rockwood, Erastus Snow, myself, how Bert Carrington and Porter Rockwell.<sup>77</sup>

When the role of the political organ Joseph Smith brought into being to carry out his plan of the exodus is properly understood, there is little wonder that the saints considered themselves "a distinct nation" after leaving the confines of the United States.<sup>78</sup> The fact that the General Council had an ideal of political economy which they went west to carry out also explains another interesting statement. We can now see why Brigham Young, with reference to the provincial state of Deseret, could in truth declare "Joseph Smith organized this government before, in Nauvoo."<sup>79</sup> The real organization at political

government in the Great Basin went back to the Mormon prophet for its origin. Here, again, Brigham Young was merely carrying out the plan and designs of the founder of the Mormon movement.

In short, Brigham Young never originated one major aspect of Mormon thought or practice, during the exodus or the Great Basin period. Instead, his whole desire was to seek information on such matters from Joseph Smith. While referring to Zion's "principles of government, and how to apply them to families, neighborhoods and nations." Brigham Young later revealed how attentive he had been in acquiring his knowledge of these things from Joseph Smith. Said he:

In the days of the Prophet Joseph, such moments were more precious to me than all the wealth of the world. No matter how great my poverty -- if I had to borrow meal to feed my wife and children, I never let an opportunity pass of learning what the Prophet had to impart. This is the secret of success of your humble servant.<sup>80</sup>

The same desire to learn from the lips of the Mormon Prophet was manifested by many others -- both great and small--among the members of the Church. Joseph Smith was asked on one occasion how he managed to govern so great a number of people as existed in the cause he espoused. His answer was that he taught the people correct principles and they governed themselves. His reply contained more truth than fancy. Many there were who learned and applied the principles he taught. Such people were not dependent upon the genius of Brigham Young or of his associates in carrying out their part in the great designs of the movement.

The facts in this paper certainly minimize the role of Brigham Young in the exodus and the colonization of the Great Basin, but in no sense are they intended to deprecate his influence as a leader and colonizer. He is, indeed, the "Lion of the Lord" from the time he came to the leadership of the saints. There are two facts, however that should ever be kept in mind. First, Joseph Smith devised the plan of the westward move and originated every major practice and technique used in colonizing the Great Basin. Brigham Young, himself, confessed in 1856, that he "never could have devised such a plan,"<sup>81</sup> Second, other independent-thinking, strong-minded men were as well acquainted with the Prophet's view as was Brigham Young; and some among the leading men were almost of equal stature with the Mormon Moses in ability and dedication. But because

the Mormon system centered leadership in one man and gave him the responsibility of initiating the program to be carried out by the system, Brigham Young has been given almost complete credit for its achievements. The strength of Mormonism however, was not centered solely in one man. Though the system was delicately responsive to the vigorous leadership of Brigham Young, the strength of Mormonism lay in the principles it contained and the appeal of those principles to a strong and independent people. If by fate Brigham Young had not been associated with the Mormon movement at the death of Joseph Smith, the exodus and colonization of the West would still have been carried out by the Latter-day Saints.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Sunday Schools were organized among the Latter-day Saints in Kirtland, Ohio and in Nauvoo, Illinois. See, for example, Women's Exponent, IX, 42-43. On the youth organization formed by Joseph Smith, see J. M. Monroe, "A Short Sketch of the Rise of the Young Gentlemen and Ladies Relief Society of Nauvoo," Times and Seasons, IV, 155; History of the Church, V, 320-2.

<sup>2</sup> See Lowry Nelson, The Mormon Village (Salt Lake City, 1952), where it is shown that the pattern and technique of land settlement by the Latter-day Saints in the West followed that used by Joseph Smith in Ohio, Missouri and Illinois.

<sup>3</sup> See Ibid.; Hyrum L. Andrus, "Joseph Smith, Social Philosopher, Theorist, and Prophet," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Syracuse University, 1955, pp. 428-30.

<sup>4</sup> History of the Church ed. B. H. Roberts, V, 35.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., VI, 222.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 275-277.

<sup>7</sup> See Hyrum L. Andrus Joseph Smith and World Government (Salt Lake City, 1953), Chapter II.

<sup>8</sup> Less than a week before his death Joseph Smith started for the Great Basin in the Rocky Mountain," but was persuaded to return. History of the Church, VI, 543. In his last address to the Nauvoo Legion, he informed 671 men that they would be called upon to gather the saints to the Rocky Mountains. See "Diary of William Bryan Pace and Biography of His Father James Pace, 1832-1907, 1811-1888," pp. 3-6, and the "Journal of Samuel Holister Rogers," pp. 198-201. Mosiah Hancock reported a visit of the Prophet to his

father's home at this time when Joseph Smith pointed out the general route the saints were expected to follow to "the valley of the Great Salt Lake,"---"The Life Story of Mosiah Lyman Hancock," pp. 27-29.

<sup>9</sup> See Andrus, Joseph Smith and World Government, Chapter I.

<sup>10</sup> William Clayton's Journal, pp. 195-196.

<sup>11</sup> Doctrine and Covenants, Section 87. This is a collection of Joseph Smith's revelations and inspired writings. The writer quotes from the current edition.

<sup>12</sup> On April 16, 1847, William Clayton, the camp clerk reported that they were going west "to find a home where the Saints can live in peace and enjoy the fruits of their labors, and where . . . the kingdom of God [shall] flourish." --Journal, pp. 76-77.

<sup>13</sup> see Ibid., 7303-15, where this idea is expressed in a revelation to Joseph Smith.

<sup>14</sup> "History of Young" Millennial Star, MI, 323-9

<sup>15</sup> Millennial Star, X, 81.88.

<sup>16</sup> History of the Church VI, 260-261.

<sup>17</sup> See Ibid., 274, 343, 356, etc. See also John E. Lee, A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee 1848-1876, ed. Robert Class Cleland and Juanita (San Marino, 1955), I, 89.

<sup>18</sup> See George Hiller, Sr. and George Miller, Jr., A Mormon Bishop and His Son ed. H. M. Mills (London, England; nd), p. 49.

<sup>19</sup> History of the Church, VII, 387.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 387-8.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 395, 401, 405, 406-7, 439.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 447. That the General Council and the Council of Fifty were the same body is evident from several references. B. H. Roberts, the Mormon historian, identifies it as such. See Ibid., p. 439. See also Journal History under date of September 9, 18145. In his diary, Hosea Stout identifies the September 30th meeting as being held by the Council of Fifty while it was referred to as a meeting of the General Council in the above source.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 254-5.

<sup>24</sup> Journal History, March 27, 1846.

<sup>25</sup> "Salt Lake High Council Record" MS (1869-1872), pp. 83-84.

<sup>26</sup> Journal History, under above date.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> History of the Church, VII, 567; Journal History, January 11, 1846.

<sup>29</sup> "Diary of Hosea Stout," Typewritten MSS at the Brigham

Young University Library, II, under above date.

<sup>30</sup> History of the Church, VII, 567.

<sup>31</sup> "Diary of Hosea Stout," II, January 19, 1846.

<sup>32</sup> History of the Church, VII, 569.

<sup>33</sup> John D. Lee, "Diaries and Official Records of John D. Lee, 1844-1846, 1850-1851, 1861-1878," unpublished diaries, minutes, etc. kept by Lee (not complete), Brigham Young University Library, February 17, 1846.

<sup>34</sup> Journal History, March 27, 1848, reports this reorganization made sometime previous to this date.

<sup>35</sup> "Diaries and Official Records of John D. Lee," March 9, 1846.

<sup>36</sup> Journal History, March 27, 1846. This reorganization also was effected by the council.

<sup>37</sup> William Clayton's Journal (Salt Lake City, 1921), pp. 9-10.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., See also Journal History, March 27, 1846,

<sup>39</sup> Benjamin Johnson, "An Interesting Letter," unpublished letter from Johnson to George S. Gibbs, April to July, 1903. Brigham Young University Library, p. 9. Johnson was a member of the Council during the exodus.

<sup>40</sup> Miller, op. cit., pp. 22-23

<sup>41</sup> "Diary of John D. Lee, 1844, 1846, 1850-1851," February 22, 1846. The writer has taken the liberty of editing quotes from this unpublished diary by supplying some needed punctuation marks and correcting misspelled words.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., under the above date.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., under the above date.

<sup>44</sup> William Clayton's Journal, pp. 9-10.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>46</sup> These letters reversed spell FIFTY, Lee's way, at times, of designating the Council of fifty.

<sup>47</sup> "Diary of John D. Lee, 1844, 1846, 1850-1851," April 2, 1846.

<sup>48</sup> William Clayton's Journal, pp. 17-18.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., under the above date.

<sup>50</sup> Idem.

<sup>51</sup> William Clayton's Journal, p. 21.

<sup>52</sup> "Diaries of John D. Lee, 1844, 1846, 1850-1851," under date of April 20, 1846.

<sup>53</sup> William Clayton's Journal, p. 21.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 25-6.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 26, The above deal never was completed, nor were

later efforts to seal the temple successful. It was finally destroyed by incendiaries.

<sup>56</sup> "Diaries of John D. Lee, 1844, 1846, 1850-1851," under date of

<sup>57</sup> A term Lee used to designate the General Council. See Ibid., under date of May 20, 1846, and compare with Journal History, under date, where the meeting Lee designates is seen to be one held by the General Council, or at least a group of its members.

<sup>50</sup> "Diaries of John D. Lee, 1844, 1846, 1850-1851," under date of May 3, 1846.

<sup>59</sup> William Clayton's Journal, p. 28.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 30-3.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 31-32.

<sup>62</sup> Journal History May 20, 1846.

<sup>63</sup> "Diaries of John D. Lee, 1844, 1846, 1850-1851," under same date. <sup>64</sup> Ibid.; Journal History, same date.

<sup>65</sup> Miller, op. cit., p. 24

<sup>66</sup> Johnson to Gibbs, pp. 22-3.

<sup>67</sup> William Clayton's Journal, pp. 50-54.

<sup>68</sup> Journal History, July 13, 1846.

<sup>69</sup> William Clayton's Journal, pp. 55., be General Council made the final decision not to send a company west August 1, 1846. See "Diaries of John D. Lee, 1844, 1846, 1850-1851," under that date. The following day they wrote to Colonel Thomas L. Kane informing him of their decision-- Ibid., August 2, 1846.

<sup>70</sup> William Clayton's Journal, p. 50

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Journal History, December 25, 26, 27, 1846.

<sup>73</sup> Miller, op. cit., pp. 28-9. Miller at this time was fast becoming disaffected in his feelings toward his associates and was later excommunicated.

<sup>74</sup> Journal History, January, 4, 1847. The plan to raise food "at the foot of the mountain" was not carried out.

<sup>75</sup> John D. Lee, Journals of John D. Lee, ed. Charles Kelley (Salt Lake City, 193), p. 53.

<sup>76</sup> William Clayton's Journal, p. 74.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp. 202-203.

<sup>78</sup> So stated Ezra T. Benson, a member of the General Council. See Lee, Journal of John D. Lee, p. 25.

<sup>79</sup> Journal History, January 19, 1863. See Andrus, Joseph

Smith and World Government, Chapt. IV for a treatment of the General Council's role in the formation of the state of Deseret in the Great Basin.

<sup>80</sup> Journal of Discourses, XII, 269-270.

<sup>81</sup> From a Sermon on August 21, 1856.