

# JOSEPH SMITH AND WORLD GOVERNMENT

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## PREFACE

For some time I have had a deep interest in the social, economic and political aspects of Joseph Smith's thought. This interest prompted me to organize my graduate studies at Brigham Young University and at the Maxwell School Of Citizenship And Public Affairs at Syracuse University around the Prophet and the historical picture of his day. My major academic interest have therefore been in the religious, social, economic and political picture in America between the time of the founding of our Federal Constitution and the American Civil War, and to study the rise and development of the Church in this historical background. My master's thesis and my doctoral dissertation were both written on the Prophet Joseph Smith – "World Government As Envisioned In The Latter-day Saint 'City of Zion'" and "Joseph Smith, Social Philosopher, Theorist, And Prophet" – and his effort to set the mold of a new socio-religious, economic and political system that will eventually rise to be a universal power. At Syracuse University my academic requirement was also centered in getting a competent understanding of the historical picture of the rise of Western Civilization from the Renaissance to the American Civil War.

Since completing my doctoral studies at Syracuse University, in 1955, my interest in the above areas has continued. This volume is largely the result of my further research, yet based in many ways on my previous studies; and it includes many of my former findings. The material presented here is also part of a larger study I have had underway for several years – that of producing a multi-volume work which will adequately define Joseph Smith's social, economic and political concepts, based on the religio-spiritual foundations of the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ, while placing the Prophet in the context of the historical picture of his day.

But because of the importance and nature of the information herein contained, it seems proper to publish this material at this time. I take full responsibility for the views which are set forth in this book.

This is the first publication in modern times that shows that Joseph Smith actually organized the nucleus of the Government of God on earth in the form of the General Council, or, as it was called, the Council of Fifty, because of the approximate number of men who were first given membership in it.

It is also the first written work that sets forth the concept of the Government of God that was revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and discloses the practical role it played in the westward move of the Latter-day Saints from Illinois, and in the colonization of the West under Brigham Young.

During the first half of the twentieth century the knowledge of the General Council was lost to the world; and it was only after the publication of a volume of John D. Lee's Journals by the Huntington Library, in California, called *A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee*, in 1955, that substantial progress was made in bringing the knowledge of this political body to light.

In the fall of 1955, Professor J. Keith Melville and I were members of the faculty of Ricks College, in Rexburg, Idaho, where I taught a class that academic year on the social, economic, and political thought of Joseph Smith.

Professor Melville had written his master's thesis, in 1949, on "The Political Philosophy of Brigham Young," and was then working on his doctoral dissertation (which he completed in 1956), entitled "The Political Ideas of Brigham Young."

Until the publication of these diaries of John D. Lee, neither Professor Melville nor I knew that the Government of God was more than an ideal in early Latter-day Saint thought – that there had been an actual political organ organized by Joseph Smith.

During the fall quarter at Ricks College, 1955, Melville called my attention to a statement in Lee's diary that showed that the political organ of the Kingdom had been a practical functional system. Yet the editors of his diaries apparently had little correct understanding of it. But with each of our academic backgrounds, we could see the significance of Lee's disclosures.

Beginning at this very moment, I started to gather and relate information on the role of the Council of Fifty among the Latter-day Saints, beginning by reading and taking notes on the things which Lee included in this set of diaries.

Then, in the fall of 1956 I was made a member of the Brigham Young University faculty where I continued my research. I then became acquainted with Jacob Heinerman, who operated the Cottage Book Store in Provo and who gave me some materials he had gathered on the Council of Fifty.

With these materials in my brief case I then went through the Journal History in the LDS Church Historical Library and took all the materials I could find there, using the materials in my brief case to identify dates and activities of the Council of Fifty in the exodus and colonization of the Great Salt Lake Valley.

During that academic year I also gave lectures and conducted discussions, both on and off campus, on the subject of the Government of God, at which faculty members from the departments of religions, history and political science were present, with interested students.

As a result, much interest was created on the subject, and from that interest further research has been done by myself and others. On Tuesday, March 25, 1958, Deseret Book Company then gave me a copy of *Joseph Smith And World Government*, which

came off the press that day, giving the results of my research on the activities of the General Council to that time. It was published without changing one word which I had written.

This volume has made important contributions to Mormon literature, as the first published analysis which was printed concerning Joseph Smith's concept of world government. It gives conclusive evidence that the Prophet included, within his concept of the Kingdom of God, the program of a political government administered under the Priesthood – not the Church – of Zion, as separate bodies, but united in the fact that both institutions were to be directed by Priesthood.

From the spring of 1844 to at least 1870, the political system played *a dominant role* in planning and carrying out the Exodus to Utah. The day after Brigham Young arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, though still weak from illness, climbed to the top of Ensign Peak, which he named, and planted a flag of the Kingdom there, with explanations concerning the role the Peak would play in the future. Later, the Council of Fifty created and organized itself into the provincial State of Deseret, initiated ZCMI, and directed some of the locations and organizations of cities which were then established.

By this volume and the writings of other perceptive historians the whole picture of the Exodus and colonization of the West by the Latter-day Saints has been reoriented to show more accurate pictures of the past.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance of those who have aided me in my studies over the past years. They include the members of my graduate committee at Brigham Young University and at Syracuse University. Grateful acknowledgment is also made to the Church Historian's Office for important material that has gone into this volume; to Jacob Heinerman, of the Cottage Book Store, Provo, for assistance in locating pertinent information; and to my wife, parents, students and friends for the encouragement they have given to me along the way. I also wish to thank Dean B. Farnsworth and Soren F. Cox of the Brigham Young University faculty for checking the manuscript for grammatical errors and others of the faculty for reading parts of the manuscript and offering helpful suggestions.

Hyrum L. Andrus

## INTRODUCTION

This book is the first work published in modern times which sets forth the concept of the government of God which was revealed through Joseph Smith and shows the significance of that concept in the westward move of the Latter-day Saints from Illinois, and the colonization of the West under Brigham Young. It is also the first work written to show that Joseph Smith actually organized the nucleus of that divine political system on earth, in the form of the General Council or, as it was nicknamed, the Council of Fifty.

During the first half of the twentieth century the knowledge of the General Council was virtually lost to the world, and it was only after the publication of *A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee, 1848-1876*, in 1955, that substantial progress was made in bringing the knowledge of this political body to light in recent times. In the fall of 1955, J. Keith Melville and I were on the faculty of Ricks College, in Rexburg, Idaho, where I taught a class that academic year on the social, economic, and political thought of Joseph Smith. Melville had written his master's thesis, in 1949, on "The Political Philosophy of Brigham Young," and was then working on his doctoral dissertation (which he completed in 1956), entitled "The Political Ideas of Brigham Young." In 1952, I wrote my master's thesis on the subject "World Government as Envisioned in the Latter-day Saint 'City of Zion,'" and in the summer of 1955 I completed my doctoral dissertation entitled "Joseph Smith, Social Philosopher, Theorist and Prophet."

Until the publication of Lee's diaries, neither Melville or I realized that the government of God was more than an ideal in early Latter-day Saint thought—that there had been an actual political organ started by Joseph Smith. During the fall quarter at Ricks College, 1955, Melville called my attention to a statement in Lee's diary which indicated that the political organ of the kingdom had been a practical and functional thing. The editors of his diaries, however, apparently had little correct understanding of it. But with our background, we could see the significance of Lee's disclosures.

Beginning at that time, I started to gather and relate information on the role of the Council of Fifty among the Latter-day Saints. In the fall of 1956, I accepted a position on the faculty of the Brigham Young University where I continued my research and probed the subject further at the Church Historian's Library in Salt Lake City. I also gave lectures and conducted discussions both on and off campus on the subject of the government of God, at which faculty members from the departments of religions, history and political science were present, with interested students. As a result, there was much interest created in the subject, and from that interest further research has been done by myself and others. In the spring of 1958, this volume came from the press as the first published analysis of the government of God and its role in Latter-day Saint history in recent times, giving the results of my research on the activities of the General Council to that time.

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