

# 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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# Chapter 1

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD

A MIGHTY vision filled the mind of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet: “I intend to lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world,” he emphatically declared. “It will not be by sword or gun that this kingdom will roll on; the power of truth is such that all nations will be under the necessity of obeying the gospel.”<sup>1</sup>

Joseph Smith did not limit his concept of the Gospel program to the religious sphere of life. To him, it extended into the area of the social, where it pointed out correct doctrine and philosophy relative to such matters as education, recreation, and marriage; it gave to the world a divine system of economics, known as the Law of Consecration and Stewardship; and, finally, it gave promise of a political law that would emanate from the Priesthood, to govern the world in righteousness. So important was the latter program that the Prophet argued that the establishment of Zion’s political program “is the only thing that can bring about the ‘restitution of all things spoken of by all the holy Prophets since the world was’—the dispensation of the fulness of times, when God shall gather together *all things* in one”<sup>2</sup> In anticipation of this future era, he wrote to Henry Clay: “I long for a day of righteousness, when ‘He whose right it is to reign shall judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth’; and I pray God, who hath given our Fathers a promise of a perfect government in the last days, to purify the hearts of the people and hasten the welcome day.”<sup>3</sup>

It is an assumption within Mormon thought that Joseph Smith was privileged to lay the foundation of the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times mentioned above, in which the expected restoration of all things must eventually be brought about. By this own reasoning, then, the Prophet would not have completed his mission in life had he confined himself to the realm of the religious—had he not given by revelation the basic political principles and philosophy of the millennial government for which he sought.

On March 11, 1844, Joseph Smith organized a body of men as the nucleus of the new government.<sup>4</sup> During the period of its existence, this political group was referred to by several names. At the time of its organization and immediately thereafter, the Prophet spoke of it as a “Special Council.”<sup>5</sup> Later, he termed it the “General Council”;<sup>6</sup> and after his death this appellation was reduced to the “Council.”<sup>7</sup>

A popular name used to designate this body of men was the “Council of Fifty.”<sup>8</sup> This name is derived from the number of men composing the initial organization during the lifetime of Joseph Smith. George Miller, a prominent bishop in the Church at that time, noted that “up to the number of fifty three” men were given membership in the group.<sup>9</sup> Miller’s testimony is partially supported by Brigham Young, who said: “The Council was composed of about fifty members.”<sup>10</sup> Benjamin F. Johnson, another member of the group, although not as specific as Miller, later wrote that the Council “at times would exceed fifty in number.”<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that available sources nowhere indicate that this body was to be specifically made up of fifty men. There is some

evidence that Brigham Young added considerably to its number.<sup>12</sup> This being true, the name Council of Fifty could be somewhat misleading.

Since the council was considered as the nucleus of God's future government on earth, it was also termed the "Council of the Kingdom."<sup>13</sup> This name may have originated from an unpublished revelation to Joseph Smith on the subject of the political aspects of the Kingdom of God. By this name, it stated, ye shall be known: "The Kingdom of God and His laws, with the keys and powers thereof and judgment in the hands of his servants."<sup>14</sup> When viewed in this light, the term Kingdom of God had a broader meaning than is usually applied to it when it is used to denote the Church of God. Brigham Young explained by first referring to the various organizations that make up the Church and then stating:

This is what we are in the habit of calling the Kingdom of God. But there are further organizations. The Prophet gave a full and complete organization of this kingdom the spring before he was killed. . . . The Kingdom of God will protect every person, every sect and all people upon the face of the whole earth in their legal rights; I shall not tell you the names of the members of this kingdom, neither shall I read to you its constitution, but the constitution was given by revelation. The day will come when it will be organized in strength and power.<sup>15</sup>

Another member of this body made a similar explanation. To quote:

This council alluded to is the municipal department of the Kingdom of God set up on the earth, from which all law emanates, for the rule, government and control of all nations, kingdoms, and tongues and people under the whole heavens, but not to control the Priesthood, but to council, deliberate and plan for the general good and upbuilding of the Kingdom of God on the earth.<sup>16</sup>

From the above statements it can be seen that the term Kingdom of God had reference to the complete program to be administered eventually by the powers of the priesthood. That program envisioned the development of both a Church and a State. Said John Taylor:

Was the kingdom that the Prophets talked about, that should be set up in the latter times, going to be a Church? Yes. And a state? Yes, it was going to be both Church and State. . . .<sup>17</sup>

The foundation of the Kingdom of God rests in the priesthood. Joseph Smith explained that the Kingdom of God had been on the earth "whenever there has been a righteous man on earth unto whom God revealed His word and gave power and authority to administer in His name, and where there is a priest of God—a minister who has power and authority from God to administer in the ordinances of the gospel and officiate in the priesthood of God."<sup>18</sup> As the basis of the kingdom of God, the priesthood was considered as having two functionaries to administer its law and carry out its program in the earth. The first of these organizations is the Church. As an instrument of the priesthood, it is

dependent upon the priesthood for its power to officiate in the religious sphere of life. The second organizational tool of the priesthood is the Government of God, which functions in the political sphere of society.

As an instrument of the priesthood, the Church was to play an important role in producing the Government of God. Said Brigham Young:

The Church of Jesus Christ will produce this government, and cause it to grow and spread, and it will be a shield round about the Church. And under the influence and power of the Kingdom of God, the Church of God will rest secure and dwell in safety, without taking the trouble of governing and controlling the whole earth. The Kingdom of God will do this, it will control the kingdoms of the world.<sup>19</sup>

Were the Church to fulfil its responsibility in establishing the Government of God all things would then be under the jurisdiction of the priesthood. Said John Taylor on this subject:

When the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven, the priesthood will be the only legitimate ruling power under the whole heavens; for every other power and influence will be subject to it. When the millennium . . . is introduced all potentates, powers, and authorities—every man, woman, and child will be in subjection to the Kingdom of God; they will be under the power and dominion of the priesthood of God; then the will of God will be done on the earth as it is done in heaven.<sup>20</sup>

Since the Church was to play an important role in establishing the Government of God on the earth, the organization of the Church has been considered as the beginning of the latter organization. Orson Pratt viewed matters in this light, and in 1872 declared:

Forty-two years ago, on the 6th day of April, the Prophet Joseph Smith was commanded by the Lord Almighty to organize the Kingdom of God on the earth for the last time—to set up and make a beginning—to form the nucleus of a Government that never should be destroyed from the earth, or, in other words, that should stand forever. . . . There is now organized on the earth a Government which never will be broken as former Governments have been. This will stand forever. It began very small—only six members were organized in this Government on Tuesday the 6th day of April, 1830. . . .<sup>21</sup>

Brigham Young has already been quoted as stating that the constitution of the Government of God was given to Joseph Smith through revelation. Evidently that revelation clarified the principles upon which the new government was to rest, and how it was to be associated with the Church in the full program of the Kingdom of God. President Young and others referred on more than one occasion to the latter question, stating that the political organ “grows out of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but it is not the Church,”<sup>22</sup> The separate nature of the two organizations implied in his statement is amply attested; for instance, it has already been noted that, while the political kingdom had been established for governmental purposes, it was not to control the priesthood.<sup>23</sup>

When the nucleus of the Government of God was first organized by the Prophet, Brigham Young reported that it had as members “several” men who “were not members of the Church.”<sup>24</sup> This fact of itself would indicate that the political organ was not to be identical with the Church. That this was right and proper Brigham Young explained:

... A man may be a legislator in that body which will issue laws to sustain the inhabitants of the earth in their individual rights and still not belong to the Church of Jesus Christ at all. And further though a man may not even believe in any religion it would be perfectly right, when necessary, to give him the privilege of holding a seat among that body which will make laws to govern all the nations of the earth and control those who make no profession of religion at all; for that body would be governed, controlled and dictated to acknowledge others in those rights which they wish to enjoy themselves.<sup>25</sup>

Among others who understood Joseph Smith’s views on this subject and expressed them from time to time was George Q. Cannon, who said:

We are asked, Is the Church of God, and the Kingdom of God the same organization? and we are informed that some of the brethren hold that they are separate.

This is the correct view to take. The Kingdom of God is a separate organization from the Church of God. There may be men acting as officers in the Kingdom of God who will not be members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. *On this point the Prophet Joseph gave particular instructions before his death, and gave an example, which he asked the younger elders who were present to always remember. It was to the effect that men might be chosen to officiate as members of the Kingdom of God who had no standing in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Kingdom of God when established will not be for the protection of the Church of Jesus Christ alone, but for the protection of all men, whatever their religious views or opinions may be. Under its rule, no one will be permitted to overstep the proper bounds or to interfere with the rights of others.*<sup>26</sup>

This concept of separation of Church and State was also emphasized when, following the death of Joseph Smith, George Miller and Alex Badlam wanted “to call together the Council of Fifty and organize the Church.” In reply, “They were told that the Council of Fifty was not a Church organization, but was composed of members irrespective of their religious faith and organized for the purpose of consulting on the best manner of obtaining redress of grievances from our enemies, and to devise means to find and locate in some place where we could live in peace; and that the organization of the Church belonged to the Priesthood alone.”<sup>27</sup>

It should further be noted that, even though Joseph Smith and the Quorum of the Twelve were members of the General Council, those who were members, said Benjamin F. Johnson, did not include “all of the constituted authorities of the Church, for Presidents [Sidney] Rigdon, [William] Law or [William] Marks, the High Council, or presidents of quorums were not members of that council.”<sup>28</sup> The Council of Fifty was not merely a

body of the leading authorities in the Church. Rigdon and Law were Joseph's Counselors in the First Presidency of the Church, and Marks was then president of the Nauvoo Stake.

According to Benjamin F. Johnson, the Prophet's "last charge" to the Quorum of the Twelve was made at a meeting of the General Council. At that time Joseph Smith indicated that the Church and the political kingdom were two separate bodies. Said Johnson of the Prophet:

. . . He stood before that association of his select friends, including all of the Twelve, and with great feeling and animation he graphically reviewed his life of persecution, labor and sacrifice for *the church and the Kingdom of God, both of which he declared were now organized upon the earth*, the burden of which had become too great for him longer to carry, that he was weary and tired with the weight he had so long borne, and he then said, with great vehemence: "And in the name of the Lord, I now shake from my shoulders the responsibility of bearing off the Kingdom of God to all the world, and here and now I place that responsibility, with all the keys, powers and privileges pertaining thereto, upon the shoulders of you the Twelve Apostles, *in connection with this council*; and if you will accept this, to do it, God shall bless you mightily and shall open your way; and if you do it not you will be damned."<sup>29</sup>

Though the Church and the political government were held to be separate bodies, the fact that the latter was considered as growing "out of the Church" implies some sort of union between the two organizations. On the subject a prominent Mormon scholar wrote that "the Church must be regarded as part" of the political organization; "an essential indeed, for it is the germ from which the kingdom is to be developed, and the very heart of the organization."<sup>30</sup> John Taylor also explained:

We talk sometimes about the church of God, and why? We talk about the Kingdom of God [i.e., the envisioned system with worldwide political authority], and why? Because, before there could be a kingdom of God, there must be a church of God, and hence the first principles of the gospel were needed to be preached to all nations, as they were formerly when the Lord Jesus Christ and others made their appearance on the earth. And why so? Because of the impossibility of introducing the law of God among a people who would not be subject to and be guided by the spirit of revelation. Hence the world have generally made great mistakes upon these points. They have started various projects to try to unite and cement the people together without God; but they could not do it. Fourierism, communism—another branch of the same thing—and many other principles of the same kind have been introduced to try and cement the human family together. And then we have had peace societies, based upon the same principles. But all these things have failed, and they will fail, because, however philanthropic, humanitarian, benevolent, or cosmopolitan our ideas, it is impossible to produce a true and correct union without the Spirit of the living God and the Spirit can only be imparted through the ordinances of the gospel. Hence Jesus told his disciples to go and preach the gospel to every creature. . . . It was by this cementing, uniting spirit, that true sympathetic, fraternal relations could be introduced and enjoyed.<sup>31</sup>

A study of Mormon thought in light of the above church and state relationship indicates that several factors were held to be important in bringing about the development of the political kingdom, as it was to grow out of the Church. First, the Church was not accepted as merely a religious body, but as a society with a socio-religious and economic program similar to the ancient Zion of Enoch where the people were said to be of “one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness,” and had “no poor among them.”<sup>32</sup> To develop such a system of brotherhood and union, the cementing faith and uniting powers of the gospel were held to be important. Individual faith sufficiently strong to release the power of God’s Spirit into the lives of the people was accepted as the initial step in developing the necessary union. Repentance was necessary to reconcile the individual to God, that he might be at peace with his neighbor. Baptism, with its holy covenant to serve both God and men, was important to dedicate the people to brotherhood. And, finally, reception of spiritual light and truth through the gift of the Holy Ghost, as bestowed upon each individual through the powers of a living priesthood, was accepted as a vital key in developing each person toward a knowledge of all truth and the realization of full and mature brotherly union.

Thus united through the assistance of religious and spiritual forces, the society of Zion was expected to develop the new social and economic principles revealed through Joseph Smith. The successful achievement of this task may be said to be the second preliminary factor in developing the Church to the point where the political program of the kingdom might be developed. In achieving this goal, the society of Zion was expected to become “independent of every incumbrance beneath the celestial kingdom, by bonds and covenants of mutual friendship and mutual love.”<sup>33</sup> A revelation to Joseph Smith stated the need for Zion to attain such a condition of independence, that she might properly fulfil her political responsibilities. After speaking of the economic principles of the system, it said:

Behold, this is the preparation wherewith I prepare you, and the foundation, and the ensample which I give unto you whereby you may accomplish the commandments which are given you;

That through my providence, notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon you, that the church may stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world;

*That you may come up unto the crown prepared for you and be made rulers over many kingdoms.*<sup>34</sup>

Thus united as a body of free men, the society of Zion was to become a standard of correct social organization. Centered at the focal point of interest in the newly developed world order, the Saints could, by the force of example, command the attention of all men, urging them to emulate the example that Zion set. Mormon literature is filled with statements to the effect that one day the wise and learned of the earth will come to Zion to learn of her ways that they might walk in her paths. One of the crying needs of the world is for such a standard as the Prophet envisioned to be developed fully and

recognized by all men for its ability to cope with the social and economic problems of society without turning to the state and socializing its functions. The use of Zion's covenant system as such a standard must be recognized as a paramount feature in Joseph Smith's concept of a new world government based upon an unsocialized theory of government.

Finally, by developing the society of Zion as above indicated, there would be a stable and united body capable of initiating the political program of the kingdom on a theocratic basis. God could then dictate, through revelation, the affairs of His kingdom on earth. Only by a sufficient number of people acquiring a knowledge of the necessary spiritual truths and applying them in their lives could the Government of God be established upon the proper basis, under a true relationship with God.

The Latter-day Saint concept of a theocratic government was said to have little relationship to many theocracies of the past. Brigham Young explained as follows:

What do the world understand theocracy to be? A poor, rotten government of man, that would say, without the shadow of provocation or just cause, "Cut that man's head off; put that one on the rascal, arrest another, and retain him in unlawful and unjust dress while you plunder his property and pollute his wife and daughters; massacre here and there." The Lord Almighty does nothing of that kind, neither does any man who is controlled by his Spirit.<sup>35</sup>

The theocratic government organized by Joseph Smith was held to be a perfect instrument. Said Orson Pratt of the newly organized political organ:

There is a nucleus of a government, formed since that of the United States, which is perfect in its nature. It is perfect, having emanated from a Being who is perfect.<sup>36</sup>

Brigham Young shared such views. Zion's theocratic government, he stated, "is the only true form of government on the earth."<sup>37</sup> As a theocracy, the Government of God, he explained on another occasion, "will be controlled upon the same basis, in part, as that of the Government of the United States; and it will govern and protect in their rights the various classes of men, irrespective of their different modes of worship."<sup>38</sup>

The implied relationship between the concept of government under the Constitution of the United States and the concept of government under the Kingdom of God is a matter of interest and importance. In the field of political thought, the Latter-day Saints maintain that the United States Constitution was divinely inspired; and, as John Taylor once stated, it "was the entering wedge for the introduction of a new era, and in it were introduced principles for the birth and organization of a new world."<sup>39</sup> The establishment of the Constitution of the United States was also looked upon as a preparatory development necessary to the later establishment of the Kingdom of God. Without it there could not have existed "sufficient liberty of conscience," said Brigham Young, to establish the Saints and develop the latter program.<sup>40</sup>

But the Constitution of the United States was looked upon as more than a preparatory development, guaranteeing the necessary freedom to establish God's kingdom on the earth. It was, said Orson Pratt, "a stepping stone to a form of government infinitely greater and more perfect—a government founded upon Divine laws, and officers appointed by the God of heaven."<sup>41</sup> On another occasion, Pratt combined the ideas in the above statements in the following explanation:

. . . The Lord had a hand in framing [the] . . . Constitution. Why did not the Lord, at the time, introduce a perfect government—a theocracy? It was simply because the people were not prepared for it. . . . They were far from being prepared for the government of God, which is a government of union.

But will the government of the United States continue forever? No, it is not sufficiently perfect; and, notwithstanding it has been sanctioned by the Lord at a time when it was suited to the circumstances of the people, yet the day will come . . . when the United States government, and all others, will be uprooted, and the kingdoms of this world will be united in one, and the kingdom of our God will govern the whole earth. . . .

The nucleus of such a government is formed, and its laws have emanated from the throne of God. . . .

It was for this purpose, then, that a republic was organized upon this continent, to prepare the way for a kingdom which shall have dominion over all the earth to the ends thereof.<sup>42</sup>

It was with the concept of the Kingdom of God and its program of peace in mind that Pratt exclaimed:

O America! how art thou favored above all lands! O happy Republic, how exalted above all nations! Within thee is the Kingdom of God! Thou wast chosen to prepare its way! It must increase, but thou shalt decrease! Thou didst lift up thy voice and cry to the nations, Behold here are liberty and freedom for all; but that which came after thee shall thoroughly purge the floor, and restore everlasting peace and liberty to the whole earth.<sup>43</sup>

The new government was not to be founded upon principles adverse to the Constitution of the United States. Instead, it was to be founded in those principles and further perfect the means by which they might be extended to the peoples of the earth. Said Orson Pratt:

. . . All the great and glorious principles incorporated in this great republic will be incorporated in the kingdom of God and be preserved. I mean the principles of civil and religious liberty, especially, and all other good principles that are contained in that great instrument framed by our forefathers will be incorporated in the kingdom of God; and only in this manner can all that is good in this and in foreign governments be preserved.<sup>44</sup>

It was Joseph Smith's contention, Benjamin F. Johnson reported, that all people would one day "learn war no more" by "adopting the God-given Constitution of the United States as a Paladium [sic] of Liberty and Equal Rights."<sup>45</sup> "When the day comes in which the Kingdom of God will bear rule," Brigham Young also explained, "the flag of the United States will proudly flutter unsullied on the flag staff of liberty and equal rights, without a spot to sully its fair surface; the glorious flag our fathers have bequeathed to us will then be unfurled to the breeze by those who have power to hoist it aloft and defend its sanctity."<sup>46</sup>

To establish the Kingdom of God in its political power, the Constitution of the United States was to be brought into association with Zion's socio-religious and economic society in such a way as to grant the appropriate priesthood councils in Zion the power to nominate men to political office, followed by a vote of approval or disapproval by the people over whom the officers were to have political jurisdiction. John Taylor explained:

The proper mode of government is this—God first speaks, and then the people have their action. It is for them to say whether they will have his dictation or not. They are free: they are independent under God. The government of God is not a species of priestcraft . . . where one man dictates and everybody obeys without having a voice in it. We have our voice and agency, and act with the most perfect freedom; still we believe there is a correct order—some wisdom and knowledge somewhere that is superior to ours: that wisdom and knowledge proceeds from God through the medium of the Holy Priesthood. We believe that no man or set of men, of their own wisdom and by their own talents, are capable of governing the human family aright.

These are our opinions. We believe that it requires the same wisdom that governs the planetary system, that produces seed time and harvest, day and night, that organized our system, and that implanted intelligence in finite man—that it needs the same intelligence to govern men and promote their happiness upon the earth that it does to control and keep in order the heavenly bodies; and we believe that that cannot be found with man independently.<sup>47</sup>

Since the Church, with its priesthood authority, was the body out of which the political organ was to be developed, and, since the priesthood was thereafter to have power to name men to political office, with the consent of the people, the Government of God could be said to grow out of the Church. But following the appointment of men to political office there was then to be a constitutional separation of powers between Zion and the political government. In this way the Church and the State were to be separate bodies; for example, in our present Federal government the judicial branch, in a sense, grows out of the executive branch, in that its officers have their origin as judges in the nomination of the President. But following such nominations and a vote of consent by the Senate, federal judges become separate and independent officers, subject only to the covenants and by-laws which govern their actions in office. So also with Zion and her political government: the latter was pictured as growing out of the former body, but thereafter there was to be a constitutional separation of powers between the two

organizations. In other respects, government as upheld by the Kingdom of God would very much resemble government under the United States Constitution. Said Brigham Young:

But few, if any, understand what a theocratic government is. In every sense of the word, it is a republican government, and differs but little in form from our National, State, and Territorial Governments; *but its subjects will recognize the will and dictation of the Almighty*. . . .

The Constitution and laws of the United States resemble a theocracy more closely than any government now on earth. . . . Even now the form of the Government of the United States differs but little from the Kingdom of God.<sup>48</sup>

A republican form of government reposes authority in the people who give their consent to be governed by representatives acting in their behalf and according to their best interests. The Government of God was to be founded upon this basic principle of republicanism. In addition, it was to recognize the ruling power of God. But since Mormon philosophy positively asserts that it is God's work and glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man,<sup>49</sup> even the authority of God was to serve the best interests of the people. Thus, the Prophet's concept of theocracy, while adding a desirable element of righteous authority, was held to be republican in spirit. Brigham Young spoke of the new government as the only true government on earth, "that possesses all the true principles of republicanism."<sup>50</sup> Since the Government of God was to be largely based upon the voice of the people, President Young also spoke of it as a "true democratic theocracy."<sup>51</sup> In short, he declared that if the new government were set up the people would "find it a Republican Democratic Government."<sup>52</sup>

The development of the Government of God on a theocratic basis would naturally eliminate the role of political parties as instruments for installing men in government office. Orson Pratt made this point clear in declaring, "There will be no party politicians."<sup>53</sup> On another occasion he spoke of carrying out the principles of the Constitution, "according to the order of union and oneness which prevails among the people of God."<sup>54</sup>

Excluding the church and state relationship conceived by Joseph Smith, however, it should be noted that such a concept of government as he held is similar to, if not almost identical with, the ideal sought by the Founding Fathers of the United States Constitution. They, too, envisioned a stable and united government that excluded political parties from affairs of government. The Fathers did not intend that political parties should be associated with government under the Constitution. In fact, they purposely devised the machinery of government to minimize the influence of parties in government operations. Thus, Madison introduced the argument of his famous *Federalist*, No. 10, where he discussed the subject, by stating: "Among the numerous advantages promised by a well-constructed Union, none deserve to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of faction [i.e., parties]."

The goal sought by the Founding Fathers was to establish a stable government that, again to quote the Father of the Constitution, could protect “the diversity in the faculties of man” (that is, man’s freedom and his right to different interests) as its first object, regulate the “various and interfering interests” arising from such freedom and diversity by allowing “justice . . . to hold the balance between them,” and finally, do all this without government itself being controlled or unduly influenced by a given party or group of parties. “To secure the public good and private rights against the danger of . . . faction,” he declared, “and at the same time to preserve the spirit and the form of popular government, is then the great object to which our inquiries are directed.” A person, Madison concluded, “will not fail . . . to set a due value on any plan which, without violating the principles to which he is attached, provides a proper cure for it [i.e., party spirit and its influence].”<sup>55</sup>

The Founding Fathers, said E. E. Schattschneider, held “a legalistic concept of government incompatible with a satisfactory system of party government.” By so organizing government as they did, he continued, “it was hoped that the parties would lose and exhaust themselves in futile attempts to fight their way through the labyrinthine framework of the government, much as an attacking army is expected to spend itself against the defensive works of a fortress.”<sup>56</sup> This was to hold true in the case of majority as well as minority parties and interests.

“The Fathers,” as Harry Elmer Barnes pointed out, “are conventionally held . . . to have been above party.”<sup>57</sup> But while some have considered them politically naive for espousing the ideal of government uncontrolled by parties, a deeper insight into their intentions reveals a view of political economy that lesser minds have failed to grasp. The truth of the situation is that “later generations have departed from what seems to have been their original intentions.”<sup>58</sup>

To achieve a stable government that could secure the rights of the individual, administer justice, and preserve itself against the influence of self-interested and aspiring groups, several devices were to be operative. First, “a republic . . . promises the cure for which we are seeking,” said Madison, while discussing the subject of how best to control the element of faction in a free society without “destroying the liberty which is essential to its existence.” The “delegation of government,” he explained, would “refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial consideration.”<sup>59</sup> In this process of refining and enlarging the public views, a given representative must weigh the validity of the claims and interests of each element he represents with impartial justice.

The vertical separation of power between the federal, state, and local levels of government also aids in controlling the influence of political parties. Then, too, by organizing several states into a Federal Union, Madison argued, “you take in a greater variety of parties and interests,” making “it less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens” or the ability “to act in

unison with each other” in achieving such ambitions.<sup>60</sup> The separation of power horizontally between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches on both the state and the federal levels of government also provides a means of preserving government against the power of organized party interest. An organized party might gain control of one branch of government, but seldom all three branches on both the state and federal levels. In short, “in the extent and proper structure of the Union,” as Madison concluded, “we behold a republican remedy for the disease most incident to republican government.”<sup>61</sup>

In light of the ideal of government espoused by the Fathers, party spirit was to be abhorred. “Let me . . . warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the Spirit of Party, generally,” President Washington emphatically declared in his *Farewell Address*. He then continued:

This Spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its roots in the strongest passions of the human mind.—It exists under different shapes in all Governments, more or less stifled, controlled, or repressed; but, in those of the popular form, it is seen in its greatest rankness, and is truly their worst enemy. . . .

In governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged.—From their natural tendency, it is certain there will always be enough of that spirit for every salutary purpose,—and there being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be, by force of public opinion, to mitigate and assuage it.—A fire not to be quenched; it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into flame, instead of warming, it should consume.

It was held that the Kingdom of God would restore the true concept of government as envisioned by the Founding Fathers in 1787. George Q. Cannon, for example, argued that in that future day when the Latter-day Saints uphold “Constitutional government upon this continent,” they will restore “the government to its primitive conditions, when all the political parties shall have fallen into chaos.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, Joseph Smith and his associates came closer to being the true successors of the Founding Fathers, in their original inspired concept of the Constitution, than any other body of American thinkers. It was that concept, fully developed in its guarantee of human freedom, that the Prophet held would one day be developed by the priesthood as God’s program of government for the world.

According to Joseph Smith, the Constitution was devised by God from the beginning to be a document of universal application. God did not intend it to be limited in its power and guarantee of liberty to America. The idea expressed in two revelation is that the Constitution “belongs to *all mankind* “that *every man* may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency” which I [the Lord] have given unto him.”<sup>63</sup> George Q. Cannon expressed this view while discussing Joseph Smith’s thought on the subject. To quote:

When he [God] establishes his kingdom it will protect all in their equal rights; I as a Latter-day Saint, will not have power to trample on my fellow-man who may not be orthodox in my opinion, because I am a Latter-day Saint; nor will my fellow-man to whom I am heterodox, have the power to trample upon me. Does not that look right? That is the kind of kingdom we have to contend for; that is the kind of kingdom we have to establish, and it is already provided for in the Constitution given unto us by God, and through the glorious labors of the fathers who laid the foundation of this government, who were inspired and raised [up] by our Almighty Father for this express purpose. there is no liberty that a human being can desire, neither is there a right that can be exercised properly, that we do not have under the Constitution of our land. It needs no amendment about it; it is broad enough, *if interpreted in its true spirit*, to cover the individual, the continent, and the entire globe and furnish freedom for all.<sup>64</sup>

It was held that in some future day the Kingdom of God would have two great centers of world government the City of Zion on our Western continent, and Jerusalem. Of the governmental position of the former center, Orson Pratt wrote:

The law for the government of all nations will go forth from Zion, the same as the laws for the government of the United States now go forth from Washington. Zion will be the seat of government, and her officers will be far more respected, and have far more influence, than those of any government upon the earth; all nations will yield the most perfect obedience to their commands and counsels.<sup>65</sup>

Jerusalem, though not so prominent in matters of government, was also to be established as a center of political law for the eastern hemisphere.<sup>66</sup> At a “great council of God in Jerusalem,” Heber C. Kimball quoted the Prophet as stating, there would “be a uniting of the two divisions of God’s government.”<sup>67</sup>

As a world government based upon the United States Constitution, the government of God was to be a federal system that would include all nations of the earth, allowing each nationality and race the right to possess its own customs, religions, and cultural patterns. Each component unit, however, would be required to maintain a republican form of government. There would be power in the central organ to enforce this provision.<sup>68</sup>

Organizationally, there will be as “many officers and branches to that government” as there were in the government of the United States, Brigham Young explained. “There will be such helps, governments, etc., as the people require in their several capacities and circumstances.” The government of God would have “every office, law and ordinance necessary for the managing of those who are unruly, or who transgress its laws, and to govern those who desire to do right, but can not quite walk to the line.”<sup>69</sup> Said President Young on another occasion:

We shall be under the necessity of having courts organized, unless all are in the Lord and all walk in his way; if that were the case, I do not know that we should want any sheriff, marshal, constables, magistrates, jurors, Judges or governors, because the

word of the Lord would govern and control every person; but until that time arrives we shall want officers, so that we will be prepared to reckon with the transgressors, and we shall have transgressors in building this kingdom, for it will be some time you before all are in the Lord.

The Saints had their own views on such particulars as the length of one's tenure in office and the remuneration he should receive. On the matter of tenure, Brigham Young declared that a clause limiting a president to two terms should not be found in the Constitution of the United States, nor in the constitution made by this on any other people." Instead emphasis should be placed upon finding the best man for the responsibility. "And when we get a President that answers our wishes to occupy the executive change he said "There let him sit to the day of his death and pray that he may live as long as Methuselah" The same rule should hold true for other officers. Whenever we have good officers strive to retain them, and to fill up vacancies with good there he none who would let the nation sink for a can of oysters and a lewd woman."<sup>70</sup> "Such is the Kingdom of God, in comparison" to established practices under the current system, he pointed out, while discussing the subject at another time. "When the best man is elected President, let him select the best men he can find for his counsellors or cabinet; and let all the officers within the province of the Chief Magistrate to appoint be selected upon the same principle to officiate wisely in different parts of the nation."<sup>71</sup>

When it came to the remuneration of officers in government, Joseph Smith set a fair example that emphasizes the basic Latter-day Saint view on the subject. It is reported that in serving as a councilman for the city of Nauvoo from February, 1841 to the middle of May, 1843 he received less than twenty-five dollars in all. Even while serving as mayor his income from all sources hardly gave him enough to live comfortably.<sup>72</sup> Dedication to service was to be the ruling criterion. Excessive wages, it was argued, open the way to demagogy. Said Brigham Young on the correct policy to follow:

Let the people see to it that they get righteous men to be their leaders, who will labour with their hands and administer to their own necessities, sit in judgment, legislate, and govern in righteousness; and officers that are filled with peace; and see to it that every man that goes forth among the people as a travelling officer is full of the fear of the Lord, and would rather do right at a sacrifice than do wrong for a reward.

What would be the result, if this course was adopted by the people of the United States? It would destroy the golden prospects of those who were seeking for gain alone, and men would be sought for, in the nation, state, or territory, who were for the people, and would seek earnestly for their welfare, benefit and salvation. We want men to rule the nation who care more for and love better the nation's welfare than gold and silver, fame, or popularity.<sup>73</sup>

Brigham Young was speaking from experience when he dealt with this subject. The theocratic procedure of Zion's system better facilitates carrying out such a policy as he suggested. Conscientious men very often abhor the strife and strain of party politics, and thus avoid seeking for political office.

To establish the Kingdom of God in its political authority would require a major concession on the part of non-Latter-day Saints: that of granting the appropriate priesthood councils in Zion the power to name men to governmental office, with the consent of the people. On the other hand, there were certain benefits the non-Latter-day Saint could expect to receive from accepting such a proposition. First, it would make possible the development of a world government in such a way as to promote brotherly union and avoid many of the difficulties associated with the formation and maintenance of a universal order under a political party system. For instance, people in highly civilized areas with relatively limited populations might be reluctant to join or uphold a world government wherein their interests were to be measured largely by the will of the majority. Under Joseph Smith's proposed system intelligence was to be exalted and dedicated to service through Zion's theocratic procedure, authority was to be decentralized to the level of its immediate operation through a federal system, and constitutional freedom was to be granted to all men. Highly civilized peoples could rest assured that the social, cultural, and economic advancements they had achieved would not be jeopardized by the whims and jealousies of the untutored masses.

On the other hand, those among the great masses of humanity might be reluctant to enter and sustain a system where small and powerful minorities might exercise influence and power over them. To cope adequately with such an eventuality, the Prophet's system proposed two courses of action. First, the preservation of the freedom of the individual and the political integrity of each given unit was to be realized through the governmental system of the Kingdom of God.

To understand the second proposal, the role of the society of Zion as a standard or ensign must be given further consideration. Among other things, Zion's socio-religious and economic system was to be based upon the proposition that men with wealth should consecrate of their properties to uplift the poor and downtrodden.<sup>74</sup> As a standard of true social organization conspicuously centered at the focal point of interest in the new world government, Zion's example would promote union between the rich and the poor by proposing that the former assist the latter in developing the arts of true economic prosperity. There was to be no such thing as economic imperialism in the Prophet's program. And, as has already been pointed out, the example of Zion as a free, united and independent society was also expected to point the way to the solution of the great social and economic problems of mankind through mutual covenant and mutual love.

In keeping with her role as a standard of true social organization, it was expected that Zion's moral and spiritual influence would be felt in molding public opinion and individual conduct toward the example set by the Saints. Here is the second benefit non-Latter-day Saints could expect from the Prophet's proposal. It is a recognized fact that the maintenance of free institutions depends upon an element of morality among the people. Long ago Aristotle, the great Greek philosopher and political theorist, gave his opinion that a democratic form of government was the best form of government, providing a high degree of morality existed among the people. However, he rated the same form of government as the least to be desired, where moral principle was not the guiding factor in the lives of the people. In the realm of modern economies, David McCord Wright, a

contemporary economist of some repute, argues that there must be an uplifting moral element in a free society if men are to preserve the ideal of human dignity against the power of some degrading economic practices. Thus he concludes that a free society must have a recognized group or class capable of initiating good standards.<sup>75</sup>

Wright's argument is in harmony with Joseph Smith's position that a true society must uplift the individual while leaving him free. Written laws must only punish transgressors. The uplifting power must be persuasion. Here the society of Zion, by its example and influence, was expected to play an important role in the new world order. But more than this, Joseph Smith proposed that power be reposed in a moral and spiritual environment. Arnold J. Toynbee has more recently pointed out that such must be the case. Said this eminent historian:

The great decisions of history are always moral. Technical accomplishments can be used either for good or for evil; some men must decide which it is to be. . . .

You cannot escape the moral choice. It lies in wait at the end of every path. For each new instrument we conquer intensifies the effects of our virtue or vices. Every new scientific achievement offers a further test of our spiritual powers.<sup>76</sup>

The third benefit to be derived from Joseph Smith's proposal for a new world government under the Kingdom of God was that through this means the spiritual powers reposed in Zion could then be extended into the political sphere of society. The Prophet held that revelation and guidance from God must be used to direct the political affairs of men, if the world is to have peace. In a brilliant analysis of man's inability to govern himself and to promote his own happiness, Joseph Smith reviewed the record of history and picture of tyranny, oppression, and misrule among the nations of the earth in his day. In summarizing the many examples of man's inability to govern himself aright, he declared: "All, all, speak with a voice of thunder, that man is not able to govern himself, to legislate for himself, to protect himself, to promote his own good, nor the good of the world." To properly govern the world, he declared, "it needs the wisdom of God, the intelligence of God, and the power of God."<sup>77</sup>

Said Brigham Young of the power of spiritual forces as they were to exist in the Government of God:

The kingdom that the Almighty will set up in the latter days will have its officers, and those officers will be peace. Every man that officiates in a public capacity will be filled with the Spirit of God, with the light of God, with the power of God, and will understand right from wrong, truth from error, light from darkness, that which tends to life and that which tends to death. They will say, "We offer you life; will you receive it?" "No," some will say. "Then you are at perfect liberty to choose death: the Lord does not, neither will we control you in the least in the exercise of your agency. We place the principles of life before you. Do as you please, and we will protect you in your rights, though you will learn that the system you have chosen to follow brings you to dissolution—to being resolved to native element."<sup>78</sup>

All the above factors and others were inherent in the Prophet's proposal for a world government. But while the Saints were considered as having their peculiar responsibilities in establishing and maintaining the Government of God, the immediate basis of agreement upon which all men were expected to accept and sustain the new political system was to be its guarantee of individual freedom. Thus the work of establishing the new government and spreading its powers abroad was looked upon as a co-operative effort on the part of members and non-members of the Church alike. In this light, the Quorum of the Twelve wrote, in 1847:

Come then, ye Saints; come then, ye honorable men of the earth; come then ye wise, ye learned, ye rich, ye noble, according to the riches and wisdom, and knowledge of the Great Jehovah; from all nations, and kindreds, and kingdoms, and tongues, and people and dialects on the face of the whole earth, and join the standards of Emmanuel, and help us to build up the Kingdom of God, and establish the principles of truth, life and salvation. . . .

The Kingdom of God consists in correct principles; and it mattereth not what a man's religious faith is, whether he be a Presyterian, or a Methodist, or a Baptist, or a Latter-day Saint or "Mormon," or a Catholic, or Episcopalian, or Mohammedan, 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 lie, and swear, and steal; if he shall take the name of the Great God in vain, and commit all manners of abominations, he shall have no place in our midst. . .

<sup>79</sup>

It was not expected that there would necessarily be a wholesale conversation to the religious principles of the Latter-day Saints to such extent that other faiths would cease to exist when God's political kingdom was established throughout the world. Said Brigham Young by way of explanation:

If the Latter-day Saints think, when the Kingdom of God is established on the earth, that all the inhabitants of the earth will join the church called Latter-day Saints, they are egregiously mistaken. I presume there will be as many sects and parties then as now. Still, when the Kingdom of God triumphs, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ, to the glory of the Father. Even the Jews will do it then; but will the Jews and Gentiles be obliged to belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? No; not by any means. Jesus said to his disciples, "In my Father's house are many mansions." . . . There are mansions in sufficient numbers to suit the different classes of mankind, and a variety will always exist to all eternity, requiring a classification and an arrangement into societies and communities in the many mansions which are in the Lord's house, and this will be so forever and ever.<sup>80</sup>

The establishment of the Kingdom of God throughout the earth was expected to fulfil the Lord's prayer, wherein it states: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."<sup>81</sup> In this great consummation, freedom and justice were to be established throughout the earth; and under the influence of the uplifting powers of the gospel, all men would then be raised to that plane of life which they, by the exercise of their own free agency, were capable of enjoying.

The establishment of the Kingdom of God throughout the earth was also expected to fulfil the prophecy of Daniel, wherein the Hebrew prophet declared that the Kingdom of God would roll forth out of the mountains and fill the earth in the latter days. Said Brigham Young of the fully developed program envisioned by Joseph Smith: "This is the kingdom that Daniel spoke of, which was to be set up in the last days; it is the kingdom that is not to be given to another people."<sup>82</sup>

In interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel explained that the Babylonian monarch had been shown the rise and fall of future world powers from the then existing kingdom of Babylon to the modern era of the national state system that came fully into being about the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the days of these latter-day kingdoms, Daniel declared, "shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break into pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." The Hebrew prophet portrayed God's Kingdom of the latter days as a stone that would roll forth and fill the earth, following a period of international conflict that would eventually make a full end of all nations.<sup>83</sup>

In the minds of the Latter-day Saints, the Kingdom of God that Daniel spoke of included a program of world government. While explaining the "grand panorama of kingdoms" portrayed in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Orson Pratt said: "It was a prophetic scenery, reaching to the latter times, showing him how man-made governments should be destroyed, and how the divine government should succeed and triumph, and have universal and everlasting dominion on the earth."<sup>84</sup> Said Brigham Young:

The kingdom that Daniel saw will push forth its law, and that law will protect the Methodists, Quakers, Pagans, Jews, and every other creed there ever was or ever will be, in their religious rights. . . . The kingdom that Daniel saw will actually make laws to protect every man in his rights, as our government does now, whether the religions of the people are true or false.<sup>85</sup>

An analysis of Mormon thought leads one to conclude that Joseph Smith and his associates did not necessarily expect the new world order to be ushered in immediately. "Is man prepared to receive that government?" Brigham Young inquired in 1859. "He is not," he concluded. "I can say to these Latter-day Saints, you are not prepared to receive that government."<sup>86</sup> It would take a millennial people to establish a millennial government. Nor could the new government be established throughout the world without the co-operation of the peoples of the earth. Should they fail to give the necessary consideration to God's plan for universal peace, the Prophet held there would develop an

era of warfare and international destruction that would eventually “make a full end of all nations.”<sup>87</sup> Then, if not before, the peoples of the world would turn to the program he had been instrumental in initiating and co-operate in developing its blessings and powers throughout the earth. Meanwhile, it was hoped that an understanding of the principles and responsibilities of the latter-day kingdom would grow in the hearts and minds of the people. Said Brigham Young:

The principles, doctrines, germ, and, I may say, marrow of that Kingdom are actually planted on the earth, but does it grow to perfection at once? No. When wheat is planted and germinates, you first see the blade, and by and by the head forming in the boot, from which in due time it bursts forth and makes its appearance.<sup>88</sup>

The basic concept of the Kingdom of God as Joseph Smith defined it has been presented in this chapter. That concept was more than an ideal in the minds of the Prophet and his associates. It had a practical impact upon the history of the Mormon movement that has not before been pointed out or appreciated. Attention will now be turned to a brief analysis of some aspects of Church history, as directly influenced by the General Council and its ideal of world government.

## Chapter Footnotes

1. *History of the Church*, VI, 365. Hereafter this work will be cited as *D.H.C.*, with the appropriate volume and page number.
2. *D.H.C.*, V, 64 (Italics added by the writer).
3. Under date of May 13, 1844.
4. “The Minutes of the Council of Fifty,” Saturday, April 10, 1880, City Hall, Salt Lake City, state that this organization was effected April 7, 1842. This document is a very brief report of the meeting of the Council of Fifty, for April 10 and 21, 1880. The minutes of both meetings consist of less than 150 words. A roll of the April 10th meeting is appended, giving the names of 52 men who were present. The April 10th minutes appear to have been written by Francis M. Lyman, as the following comment is made and initialed F.M.L.: “Being called into the Council appears to me to be one of the greatest steps in my life.” The writer possesses a personal copy of these minutes from which the above is taken.  
The date given in these minutes is no doubt an error, as Joseph Smith was engaged throughout the day in activities of a non-political nature. March 11, 1844, is the date the Prophet and Brigham Young gave for the organization of this council. It is also confirmed by other evidence to be given hereafter.
5. See *D.H.C.*, VI, 260-1, 263, 264.
6. See *ibid.*, pp. 274, 343, 356, etc. This was not the first use of the term “General Council” in Mormon history, as we find special bodies referred to by this name before the organization of the 1844 group.
7. John D. Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee, 1848-1876*, ed. Robert Class Cleland and Juanita Brooks (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1955), Vol. I, p. 89. The *Journal History* also refers to this body as “The Council” or “Our Council” during the early Utah period.

8. This name was also abbreviated to the “Fifties.” See Heman Hale Smith, “The Lyman Wight Colony in Texas, 1846-1858,” unpublished typewritten manuscript, Brigham Young University Library, p. 22.
9. George Miller, Sr. and George Miller, Jr., *A Mormon Bishop and His Son, Fragments of a Diary kept by George Miller, Sr., Bishop in the Mormon Church, and some records of incidents in the life of G. Miller, Jr., Hunter and Pathfinder*, ed. H. M. Mills (London, England; nd) p. 48.
10. “History of Brigham Young,” *Millennial Star*, XXVI, 328-9.
11. Benjamin F. Johnson, “An Interesting Letter,” unpublished letter from Johnson to George S. Gibbs, April to July, 1903, Brigham Young University Library, p. 9.
12. Miller, *op cit.*, pp. 28-9.
13. See *ibid.*, p. 49.
14. Part of this revelation is quoted in the “Minutes of the Council of Fifty,” *op. cit.* See also Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-8, for another citation from this revelation where the above name is given.
15. *J. D.*, XVII, 156.
16. Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 80. The writer has taken the liberty of editing this quotation by supplying some needed punctuation marks and correcting misspelled words. Later quotations from Lee’s diaries—published and unpublished—will also be edited in a similar manner.
17. *J.D.*, V, 23-5.
18. *D.H.C.*, V, 256-9.
19. *J.D.*, II, 317. The term Kingdom of God is used here to denote the Government of God. This is also true in some other quotes used in this study.
20. *Ibid.*, VI, 25.
21. *Ibid.*, XV, 44-5.
22. *D.H.C.*, VII, 381-2.
23. Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
24. “History of Brigham Young,” pp. 328-9.
25. *D.H.C.*, VII, 382.
26. *Ibid.* (Italics by the writer). Here again the term Kingdom of God is used to denote the Government of God.
27. *Millennial Star*, XXV, 136. Lyman Wight also evidenced a similar lack of understanding on this point. In contending that Joseph, the son of the Prophet should have been ordained to succeed his martyred father, Wight said:  
 “. . . what should be done? I will here state the first thing to have been done would have been to have called the fifties together from the four quarters of the earth, which contained all the highest authorities of the church. As you will readily see, that had not the fifty constituted the highest authorities, it would have been a species of weakness to have ordained all the highest authorities into that number. The fifties assembled should have called on all the authorities of the church down to the lay-members from all the face of the earth, as much as was convenient, and after having taken sweet counsel together, in prayer and supplication before God, acknowledged our sins and transgressions which had caused our head to be taken from our midst; and then have called on young Joseph, and held him up before the congregation of Israel to take his father’s place in the flesh! Then should he have received

intelligence of our forgiveness of our sins and transgressions, and we had then gone on and finished the temple according to [the] revelations of God, and the word of his servants—then should we so have done—then should the fifty have sallied forth unto all the world, and built up according to the pattern which Bro. Joseph had given; the Twelve to have acted in two capacities, one in opening the gospel to the world, and organizing churches; and then what would have been still greater, to have counseled in the Grand Council of heaven, in gathering in the house of Israel and establishing Zion to be thrown down no more forever. In this way the church might have moved smoothly on, and onward, until the final redemption of Zion, and the building of the great temple therein.”—Address of Lyman Wight, written in December, 1851. Cited in *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 1836-1844, ed. Joseph Smith and Heman C. Smith (Lamoni, Iowa: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints 1920), II, 790-1.

28. Johnson to Gibbs, p. 9. There may be a question whether Sidney Rigdon was a member of the council or not. On date of March 19, 1844, Joseph Smith reported that Rigdon with others met with the council. *D.H.C.*, VI, 267; *Millennial Star*, XXVI, p. 329. Sidney Rigdon was later nominated by this council to be Joseph Smith’s running mate in the 1844 campaign. See *D.H.C.*, VI, 356.
29. Johnson to Gibbs, p. 10. (Italics by the writer.) A statement by Orson Hyde seems to confirm Johnson’s report that the Prophet’s charge was made during a meeting of the General Council. Hyde declared that Joseph Smith made this charge “in the presence of about sixty men.” *J.D.*, XIII, 180.
30. James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City, 1942), p. 366.
31. *J.D.*, XVIII, 137.
32. Moses 7:18-21
33. *D.H.C.*, I, 269.
34. D&C 78:13-5. (Italics by the writer.)
35. *J.D.*, VI, 346-7.
36. *Ibid.*, III, 71-2.
37. *Ibid.*, VII, 8.
38. *Ibid.*, V, 329-30.
39. *Ibid.*, XXI, 31.
40. *Ibid.*, II, 170.
41. *Ibid.*, VII, 215.
42. *Ibid.*, III, 71-3. See also, *The Seer*, I (October, 1853), 147-8.
43. *The Seer*, I (October, 1853), 149.
44. *J.D.*, XIII, 125-6.
45. Johnson to Gibbs, p. 8.
46. *J.D.*, II, 317.
47. *Ibid.*, IX, 10.
48. *Ibid.*, VI, 342. (Italics added by the writer.)
49. Moses 1:39-50. *J.D.*, VII, 8.
51. *Ibid.*, VI, 346.
52. *Ibid.*, VII, 8. He further explained:  
“The question, What is a true Republican government? is easily answered. It is a government or institution that is perfect—perfect in its laws and ordinances, having

for its object the perfection of mankind in righteousness. This is true Democracy. But Democracy as it is now is another thing. True Democracy or Republicanism, if it were rightly understood, ought to be the Government of the United States.” *Ibid.*, p. 10.

53. *The Seer*, II, 266-7.

54. *The Deseret Evening News*, VIII (October 2, 1875), No. 265.

55. See Madison’s full argument in his *Federalist*, No. 10.

56. E. E. Schattschneider, *Party Government* (New York, 1942), pp. 6-10. In explaining this fact, he further states:

“Everyone who has thought about it at all has recognized that the parties and the law are nonassimilable. The extra-legal character of political parties is one of their most notable qualities. In a highly legalistic system of government such as the government of the United States, therefore, the parties seem to be a foreign substance.”—*Idem.*

57. Harry Elmer Barnes, *History and Social Intelligence* (New York, 1926), pp. 342-6.

58. Edward Stanwood, *A History of the Presidency* (Boston and New York, 1898), p. 10.

59. *The Federalist*, No. 10.

60. *Idem.*

61. *Idem.* Lord Acton has more recently stated:

“Of all checks on democracy, federation has been the most efficacious and the most congenial. . . . The federal system limits and restrains the sovereign power by dividing it and by assigning to Government only certain defined rights. It is the only method of curbing not only the majority but the power of the whole people.” Cited in Friedrich A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, with foreword by John Chamberlain (Chicago, 1944), p. 219.

62. *J.D.*, XX, 204. Cannon stated that Joseph Smith set the pattern for the views he then expressed.

63. D&C 98:5; D&C 101:77-80 (Italics by the writer.)

64. *J.D.*, XX, 204. (Italics by the writer.)

65. According to a revelation to Joseph Smith, this city is to be built at Independence, Jackson County, Missouri. It is also referred to in Mormon thought as the New Jerusalem. See D&C 57:1-4; Ether 13.

66. *The Seer*, II (May, 1854), 266-7.

67. See Parley P. Pratt “Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” published by Wilford Woodruff, at Liverpool, England, October 22, 1845, pp. 7-10.

68. *J.D.*, VII, 142.

69. See *D.H.C.*, VI, 197-209, in which Joseph Smith discussed the subject. See also *J.D.*, VII, 13, for a statement by Brigham Young.

70. *J.D.*, 316, XV, 161.

71. *Ibid.*, XV, 161.

72. *Ibid.*, VII, 11, 14.

73. *Ibid.*, VI, 345.

74. John Henry Evans, *Joseph Smith, an American Prophet* (New York, 1946), p. 256.

75. *J.D.*, VII, 11-2.

76. See . See also sections 51, 78, 82, 96, 104, 105.

77. See David McCord Wright, *Democracy and Progress* (New York, 1950), p. 25.
78. Arnold J. Toynbee, "We Can Build a Better World," *Look*, XII (August 17, 1948), 25.
79. *D.H.C.*, V, 61-66.
80. *J.D.*, VI, 345-6.
81. *Millennial Star*, X, 81-88.
82. *J.D.*, XI, 275.
83. Matt 6:10.
84. *J.D.*, XVII, 156.
85. Dan 2:1.
86. *The Seer*, II (August, 1854), 310. See also *ibid.*, I (October, 1853), 148; *J.D.*, 86, for other statements by Orson Pratt.
87. *J.D.*, II, 189. See also *ibid.*, I, 202-3; XIII, 125, for other statements by Brigham Young. For a good statement by Wilford Woodruff, see, *ibid.*, XIII, 164.
88. *Ibid.*, VII, 142.

## **Chapter 2**

# **ORGANIZING THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD**

THE STORY of the organization of the political department of the Kingdom of God has never before been told, except in brief and incomplete statements made by some of its early members. The development of the new adjunct to the priesthood did not come without forethought on the part of the Prophet. Under date of February 20, 1844, he reported:

I instructed the Twelve Apostles to send out a delegation and investigate the locations 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, get up into the mountains, where the devil cannot dig us out, and live in a healthful climate, where we can live as old as we have a mind to.<sup>1</sup>

The immediate incentive to commence organizing the Government of God came with Joseph Smith's effort to move the Saints to the West. In this effort he and others claimed the assistance of divine revelation. Contrary to what is sometimes supposed, however, it required thought, exertion, and the consideration of several alternatives before the picture of precisely where to locate the Saints in the West was made clear. God's injunction to first "study it out in your mind"<sup>2</sup> was still in force. Revelation on matters pertaining to the exodus of the Saints was not considered as being automatic, any more than the revelation process Joseph Smith claimed to utilize in the translation of the Book of Mormon. Thus, we find the Mormon leader studying things out and considering several programs and alternatives for planting his followers in the West. One plan he considered was to colonize a portion of Texas. It was while considering this plan that Joseph Smith organized the nucleus of the Government of God.

During the early 1840's, a group of men known as the Black River Lumber Company had been located at Black River Falls, Wisconsin Territory, for the purpose of getting out lumber for the construction of the Nauvoo Temple and the Nauvoo House. After having to a great extent accomplished their mission, the group in the "Pineries" wrote to the Authorities at Nauvoo expressing their desire to remove to "the tablelands of Texas." There they proposed to establish "a place of gathering for all the South." From this region they hoped to spread the gospel throughout Texas, Brazil, the West Indian Islands and adjacent areas.<sup>3</sup> When Bishop George Miller delivered two letters expressing the desire of these men, Joseph Smith commented: "I perceive that the spirit of God is in the pineries as well as here, and we will call together some of our wise men, and proceed to set up the Kingdom of God by organizing some of its officers."<sup>4</sup>

The Prophet's comment that the Spirit of the Lord was in the pineries as well as at Nauvoo implies that he recognized the suggestions on the part of the above group to be generally in accord with his own inspiration to look toward the West. The removal of the Saints to the West, however, was not a function to be carried out by the Church as a religious body. For this reason the Prophet commenced organizing the Government of

God. The fact that he did so indicates the limitations he set to the powers of the Church and the separate and distinct functions of the Church and the political organ he developed.

The Prophet's account of the organization of the latter body is as follows:

Present—Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, John Taylor, George A. Smith, William W. Phelps, John M. Bernhisel, Lucien Woodworth, George Amos Fielding, Alpheus Cutler, Levi Richards, Newel K. Whitney. Lorenzo D. Wasson, and William Clayton, *whom I organized into a special council*, to take into consideration the subject matter contained in the above letters, and also the best policy for this people to adopt to obtain their rights from the nation and insure protection for themselves and children; and to secure a resting place in the mountains, or some uninhabited region, where we can enjoy the liberty of conscience guaranteed to us by the Constitution of our country, and rendered doubly sacred by the precious blood of our fathers, and denied to us by the present authorities, who have smuggled themselves into power in the States and Nation.<sup>5</sup>

In his report of the organization of this council, Brigham Young also noted that it was to be an organ concerned with political matters. It had as its objective, he said, the task 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. We held a number of sessions,*” he continued, “*and investigated the principles upon which our national government is founded; and the true foundation and principles of all governments.*”<sup>6</sup>

It is very probable that during one of the above mentioned meetings Joseph Smith dictated the revelation giving the constitutional principles of the new government.

The General Council also prepared several memorials to Congress for redress of grievances.<sup>7</sup> One such memorial was delivered to the Federal government by Heber C. Kimball and Lyman Wight, who left Nauvoo for that purpose on May 20, 1844.<sup>8</sup> But the main task of the council was to settle the Saints in the West. We shall see later how this body of men initiated and carried out the exodus and the colonization of the Great Basin.

Meetings of the General Council were held almost daily for some time after its organization. On March 14th, Joseph Smith reported that Lucien Woodworth had been “sent on a mission to Texas.”<sup>9</sup> The nature of his mission is not revealed in the Prophet's record. However, George Miller reports that the intention was to “send a minister to the then Republic of Texas to make a treaty with the cabinet of Texas for all that country north of a west line from the falls of the Colorado River to the Nueces, thence down the same to the Gulf of Mexico, and along the same to the Rio Grande, and up the same to the United States Territory.” Texas was expected to acknowledge the Saints “as a nation,” said Miller. On the other hand, the Saints were to help the Texas government “defend themselves against Mexico, standing as a go-between [between] the billigerant

powers.” Woodworth was chosen to represent the interest of the Saints in these negotiations. In the event an agreement was finally entered into, the Black River Lumber Company was “to take possession of the newly acquired territory.”<sup>10</sup>

Miller’s statement that Texas was expected to acknowledge the Latter-day Saints as “a nation” needs some explanation. This statement implies that the Prophet was considering the possibility of moving the whole Church to the above described area. That some consideration was given to such a move is no doubt true. How seriously Joseph Smith looked upon that plan and how far he went in carrying it out, however, is another matter. At first it seems that only the Black River Lumber Company was to go to Texas, following the completion of the proper negotiations. There they were to establish “a place of gathering for all the South.”<sup>11</sup>

In a letter dated June 12, 1849, Miller wrote:

In the spring of 1844, Joseph organized a council of fifty. I was one of that number. The question arose in regard to *settling those Saints in the South, that were making lumber in Wisconsin*, for building the temple and Nauvoo House. The decision of the council was had, and Lucien Woodworth, George Miller, and Lyman Wight appointed to settle the company and their families, *and procure a place for a stake for the gathering of the saints*; whereupon Lucien Woodworth forthwith started to Texas and returned the first of May. He negotiated with Samuel Houston (then President of the Republic of Texas) for a district of country to colonize the before mentioned saints upon, which was to have been ratified at the meeting of the Texas Congress. . . .<sup>12</sup>

In the same light, Brigham Young and Willard Richards wrote from Nauvoo to Reuben Hedlock, in England, May 3, 1844: “If any of the brethren wish to go to Texas, we have no particular objection. You may send a hundred thousand there if you can.” Then, with reference to the newly organized political organ, they added: “The kingdom is organized; and, although as yet no bigger than a grain of mustard seed, the little plant is in a flourishing condition, and our prospects brighter than ever.”<sup>13</sup>

There are several matters that must be considered along with the Texas episode if one is to get an accurate picture of this phase of Mormon history, according to the available facts. First, a word about the historical picture. The territory then under consideration as a place of settlement for the Saints “was a portion of the territory in dispute between Texas and Mexico.”<sup>14</sup> It had been ceded to Texas when she won her independence from Mexico in 1836. President Santa Anna, having been captured by the Texans, was forced to “sign a treaty as president of Mexico recognizing the independence of Texas and the territorial claim of that republic as far south as the Rio Grande.” His authority to do this was later challenged by the Mexican congress upon the grounds that he had no right to relinquish so extensive a grant, much of which the Texans could not claim as land they had settled.<sup>15</sup>

Following the release of Santa Anna, the Mexicans promptly repudiated the treaty of Velasco and thereafter kept up a series of threats, intrigues with the Indians, and petty

raids aimed at destroying the new republic. Matters would have been worse had it not been that the antagonists were separated from each other by an uninhabited strip spreading northeastward from the Rio Grande and varying in width from about one hundred and twenty miles at the coast to over six hundred at its upper end.<sup>16</sup>

The Texas government was anxious to have strong groups of colonists take over the job of settling her vast uninhabited regions, including the above territory. It was in desperate need of money; and its principle source of revenue came from the sale of public lands. For these and other reasons, several colonizing schemes were given more or less serious considerations, including an attempt to locate 8,000 French colonists “in such a way as to create a shield between the hostile Indians and the outermost Texan settlers.”<sup>17</sup> The so-called Kennedy Grant of 1842 was another attempt to colonize a large number of European settlers in Texas.<sup>18</sup>

During the forepart of 1843, an armistice was agreed upon by Texas and Mexico, which lasted until June, 1844. Here was an opportune time for the two powers to arrive at some agreement regarding the disputed Territory. It was during the latter part of this period that the Mormon leaders were negotiating with the Texas Government. There is some evidence that the government of Mexico was also a party to these negotiations.<sup>19</sup>

Back at the center of Mormon activities in Nauvoo, Joseph Smith reported that on May 2, 1844, Lucien Woodworth returned from Texas, where he had been sent by the General Council pursuant to their meeting of March 14th. The following day he gave an account of his mission to that body.<sup>20</sup> In a letter dated June 28, 1855, George Miller wrote of these developments. Said he:

. . . Woodworth returned from Texas. The council convened to hear his report. It was altogether as we could wish it. On the part of the church there were commissioners appointed to meet the Texan Congress to sanction or ratify the said treaty, partly entered into by our minister and the Texan cabinet. A Mr. Brown, Lucien Woodworth and myself were the commissioners appointed to meet the Texas Congress, and, upon the consummation of the treaty, Wight and myself were to locate the Black River Lumber Company on the newly acquired territory, and do such other things as might be necessary in the premises, and report to the Council of the Kingdom. It was further determined in Council that all the elders should set out on missions to all the States to get up an electoral ticket, and do everything in our power to have Joseph elected president. If we succeeded in making a majority of the voters converts to our faith, and elected Joseph president, in such an event the dominion of the Kingdom would be forever established in the United States; and if not successful, we could fall back on Texas, and be a kingdom notwithstanding.<sup>21</sup>

Miller’s statement implies that the plan to move the Church to Texas was pretty much decided upon at this time. This, however, was not the fact. According to available information there were two general purposes behind the Prophet’s negotiations with the Texas government. The first has been mentioned: that of establishing a stake of Zion in that area as a gathering place for the Saints. In this plan, there was no intention to move

the whole Church to Texas. Second, there was evidently some talk of setting up an independent government in that area, should circumstances make it necessary to do so. The latter proposal, however, was but one of other alternatives then being considered by the Prophet and his associates. He was then a candidate for the Presidency of the United States. In his “Views of the Powers and Policies of the Government of the United States,”<sup>22</sup> he clearly defines himself as an expansionist—one who desired to extend the jurisdiction of the United States as far west as possible. “Oregon belongs to this government honorably,” he exclaimed, “and when we have the red man’s consent, let the Union spread from the east to the west sea; and if Texas petitions Congress to be adopted among the sons of liberty, give her the right hand of fellowship, and refuse not the same friendly grip to Canada and Mexico.”<sup>23</sup> These views are consistent with the Prophet’s concept of the United States Constitution as a heaven-inspired document containing principles destined to be extended throughout the world. They leave little room for belief that he hoped to establish an independent state in the Texas area outside of the jurisdiction of the United States Constitution, except as a plan of last resort subject to the outcome of other alternatives. Again, the intent behind the organization of the General Council was to establish the Saints in the West under their own political laws, “subject to the Constitution.”<sup>24</sup>

The reasons why Joseph Smith decided to run for the Presidency will not be discussed here. Suffice it to say that foremost among those reasons was his desire to bring the cause of the Saints before the nation and thus gain redress for the wrongs that had been perpetrated upon them. This objective might have been achieved without winning the election.

The Prophet was aware that should he be elected it would only be by the greatest possible effort and through the favor of fortune. Said George Miller: “It was thought and urged by the council that so great an undertaking would require, in order to insure success, the entire and united effort of the official members of the church.”<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, the Quorum of the Twelve made arrangement for a series of conferences to be held in strategic places throughout the Union, terminating at Washington, D. C. the following September 7th through the 15th. Besides the twelve, nearly 340 of the most capable men in the Church were also sent out to work in the Prophet’s interest throughout the Union. That the General Council was involved in these matters is evident not only from Miller’s comments but also from the following notation made by Joseph Smith, April 25th:

In general council from 10 till 12, and from 2 to 5, when they adjourned *sine die*, after appointing a State Convention to meet in Nauvoo on 17th May. The council then dispersed to go abroad in the nations.<sup>26</sup>

During the period of his negotiations with the Texas government, Joseph Smith was also seeking for authority from the Federal government to raise a police force of 100,000 men to establish the jurisdiction of the United States throughout the West and to give protection and order to the colonization of that vast area. The memorial was drawn up by Willard Richards and “read, discussed, and approved by the general council” on

March 26, 1844, almost two weeks after Woodworth's initial commission to go to Texas. A similar memorial was later prepared for President John Tyler, in the event the first should fail to be accepted by Congress. Orson Hyde was chosen to carry the memorials to Washington and there work with Orson Pratt and John E. Page to secure the passage of the first through Congress.<sup>27</sup> Though it failed to gain the support of Congress, this memorial reveals the Prophet's desire to assist in extending the westward border of the United States to the Pacific and to open this new territory to the American homebuilder, along with his own people. The Prophet's proposal was by nature incompatible with any plan to establish an independent government in the area of Texas.

On May 13th, Joseph Smith attended a meeting of the General Council, at which time two letters from Orson Hyde were read. In the first, dated April 25th, Hyde reported that Congress appeared "deeply interested in the Oregon question," but due to several factors involving them in national and international politics they were not apt to act favorably upon the Prophet's memorial. Nevertheless, Hyde stated, there was a general consensus of opinion that the Mormon leader had "an undoubted right" to colonize his people in some area of the West, but it would have to be without government support. In his concluding paragraph, Hyde wrote:

. . . Most of the settlers in Oregon and Texas are our old enemies, the mobocrats of Mo. If, however, the settlement of Oregon or Texas be determined upon, the sooner the move is made the better, and I would not advise any delay for the action of government for there is such a jealousy of our rising power already, that government will do nothing to favor us. If the saints possess the kingdom, I think they will have to take it, and the sooner it is done, the more easily it is accomplished.

Your superior wisdom must determine whether to go to Oregon, to Texas, or to remain within these United States and send forth the most efficient men to build up churches, and let them remain for the time being.<sup>28</sup>

To Hyde, the Texas matter was still open for discussion.

In his second letter, dated April 26th, Hyde reported that the Mormon delegates in Washington had held a long conversation with Stephen A. Douglas; and reported that "he is ripe for Oregon and the California." The Senator from Illinois was said to have declared that "he would resign his seat in Congress if he could command the force that Mr. Smith could, and would be on the march to the country in a month." Douglas also agreed that the Latter-day Saints had a legitimate right to raise up an independent nation in the West, should it be necessary. Hyde wrote: "Douglas says he would equally as soon go to that country without an act of Congress as with; 'and that in five years a noble state might be formed; and then if they would not receive us into the Union, we would have a government of our own.'"<sup>29</sup>

Finally, in a letter dated April 30, 1844, Hyde reviewed the various alternatives, one of which the Saints might choose in locating themselves in the West. Among other things, he mentioned the possibility of establishing a stake of Zion in Texas, as a

gathering place for some of the Saints. But when it came to the proposal to set up an independent government in that area, Hyde struck a note of caution. Should such a plan be followed, he pointed out, the Saints would be forced to organize and support both an army and a navy in addition to the costs of government in its functions at home and abroad. Such a load, he concluded, would discourage those who had money to invest in the area and might even sink the infant government.

From the above evidence, it is plain that the plan to move the Church to Texas was never really decided upon. In the minds of the Mormon leaders, such a decision was not to be made until after the election of 1844. And even then it would be subject to existing circumstances. So far as Texas and Mexico were concerned, their armistice was terminated in June, 1844; and with the election of Polk to the Presidency the stage was set for the entrance of Texas into the Union, followed by the outbreak of the war with Mexico.

What Joseph Smith would have done about Texas had his life not been abruptly terminated may be subject to debate. In light of the post-election situation and the threat of war with Mexico, however, it seems highly probable that he would have looked elsewhere, as Brigham Young later did. About all that can be truthfully said, from existing evidence, is that the Prophet was considering several plans by which to secure his people in the free exercise of their constitutional rights. He sought for this end by bringing the injustices the Saints had suffered to the attention of the nation through his campaign for the presidency; he sought for the consent and assistance of the Federal government in locating the Saints and others in the West; and, finally, he even considered the alternative of establishing the Saints in the capacity of an independent nation, should all other alternatives fail.

There should be no particular odium attached to the fact that the Prophet gave consideration to this latter alternative. It is a fundamental proposition upon which legitimate governments are founded that all men have the inherent right to provide for their political welfare—to establish justice and provide for their domestic tranquility. Brigham Young, in officially organizing the State of Deseret in 1849, relied upon this inherent right. In doing so, he was establishing what the Saints considered to be the Government of God. But even though they considered the government of Deseret in this light, they immediately applied for statehood in the Union. It can be conjectured that, had Joseph Smith lived and gone to Texas, he too would have applied for statehood in the Union as soon as conditions were favorable. As it was, the existing circumstances made it necessary for the Latter-day Saints to consider establishing an independent government of their own, in the event they went to Texas. First, they could not hope to extend United States jurisdiction into this particular area had they wanted to obtain a territorial government. An effort to do so would surely have been resented by Mexico. On the other hand, it would have been impracticable to consider affiliating with either the government of Texas or Mexico. Neither of these countries would have been willing to see so large a body as the Latter-day Saints occupy this disputed territory under the flag of the other country. Nor would association with either of these countries have been compatible with the aims and aspirations of the Prophet and his associates in relation to their views on the

Kingdom of God and the United States Constitution. The only alternative left was to plan for a government that would in every way meet their needs and satisfy their desires, should they make this move.

It should be noted that in his effort to lay the necessary plans for such an eventuality, the Prophet came very near entering the field of international politics. On May 6, 1844, Joseph Smith recorded that he met with the General Council all day. During this meeting it was “voted to send Almon W. Babbitt on a mission to France and Lucien Woodworth to Texas.”<sup>30</sup> The nature of Woodworth’s mission to Texas has already been indicated. But the purpose of Babbitt’s assignment to go to France is not too clear. By profession he was a lawyer. That the Council of Fifty, after deliberating all day, would vote to send Babbitt to France on business of a religious nature, while Woodworth went to Texas to consider further negotiations on a treaty for the organization of a new state in the West, seems highly improbable. It would be more in harmony with existing developments to send Babbitt to France to determine the French government’s reaction to the organization of such a state. A comment by Brigham Young and Willard Richards in their letter to Reuben Hedlock in England, dated three days before the above meeting, seems to confirm this view, as well as to indicate that the decision to send an envoy to France had received some thought prior to the May 6th meeting. They wrote:

We are glad to hear a door is open in France, and sure we have no objections to your going over and preaching. . . . We are in hopes of sending a special messenger to France in a few days; if so, very likely he may call on you, and you pass over and give him an introduction: this would be pleasant for you all.<sup>31</sup>

A study of Babbitt’s activities thereafter, however, shows that he never departed on this mission. It may be that Orson Hyde’s letter from Washington, along with other developments prior to the time Babbitt was ready to leave Nauvoo, changed the Mormon attitude on the Texas proposal. Then, too, developments leading up to the Prophet’s martyrdom also kept him busy in Illinois.

The death of Joseph Smith, the changing political scene, and the existing need to consolidate affairs under new leadership altered the plans that had been partially made concerning the Texas proposal. It was at this point that a decision was definitely made to move to the Great Basin. Said George A. Smith:

After the death of Joseph Smith, when it seemed as if every trouble and calamity had come upon the Saints, Brigham Young, who was President of the Twelve, then the presiding Quorum of the Church, sought the Lord to know what they should do, and where they should lead the people for safety, and while they were fasting and praying daily on this subject, President Young had a vision of Joseph Smith, who showed him the mountain that we now call Ensign Peak, immediately north of Salt Lake City, and there was an ensign fell upon that peak, and Joseph said, “Build under the point where the colors fall and you will prosper and have peace.” The Pioneers had no pilot or guide, none among them had ever been in the country or knew anything about it. However, they travelled under the direction of President Young until they reached this valley. When they

entered it, President Young pointed to the point and, said he, “I want to go there.” He went up to the point and said, “This is Ensign Peak. Now, brethren, organize your exploring parties, so as to be safe from Indians; go and explore where you will, and you will come back every time and say this is the best place.” They accordingly started out exploring companies and visited what we now call Cache, Malad, Tooele, and Utah valleys, and other parts of the country in various directions, but all came back and declared this was the best spot.<sup>32</sup>

But to such men as George Miller and Lyman Wight the previous proposals were still to be carried out. Miller later wrote that he suggested that the appropriate authorities get together and “clothe” themselves “with the necessary papers, and proceed to meet the Texas Congress as before Joseph’s death agreed upon”. Continuing, he explained:

Woodworth and myself waited on Brigham, requesting him to convene the authorities so that the proper papers might be made out, and so we could be able to complete the unfinished negotiations of the treaty for the territory mentioned in my former letter. To my utter astonishment Brigham wholly refused to have anything to do in the matter, saying that he had no faith in it, and would do nothing to raise means for an outfit or expenses. Thus all hopes were cut off of establishing a dominion of the kingdom at a time when there seemed to be a crisis, and I verily believed that all that we had concocted in council might so easily be accomplished. I was really cast down and dejected.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, said Miller, “Lyman Wight became disaffected towards his brethren of the Twelve.” When the Black River Lumber Company returned to Nauvoo, he, “ever fond of authority, placed himself at the head of this company, and as it had been announced by the Twelve from the stand that Joseph had laid out a work that would take twenty years to accomplish, Lyman averred that he would commence his work then, and solicited me to take my place and go with him to locate the Black River Company.”<sup>34</sup> Although Miller reluctantly followed the leadership of Brigham Young for a time, Wight set out for Texas. Some time later, when Brigham Young summoned him to Salt Lake City, Wight replied that “nobody under the light of the heavens except Joseph Smith or John Smith, the president of the Fifty, could call him from Texas.”<sup>35</sup> There he remained while the Church commenced the colonization of the Great Basin.

## Chapter Footnotes

1. *D.H.C.*, VI, 222.
2. D&C 9:1.
3. *D.H.C.*, VI, 256, 258.
4. Miller, *op. cit.*, 48.
5. *D.H.C.*, VI, 260-1. (Italics by the writer.)
6. “History of Brigham Young,” 328-9. (Italics by the writer.)
7. *Idem.*
8. *Millennial Star*, XXVI, 727-8.
9. *D.H.C.*, VI, 264.
10. Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-9.

11. See *D.H.C.*, VI, 256-8.
12. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 1836-1844 II, 793. (Italics by writer.)
13. *D.H.C.*, VI., 354.
14. C. Stanley Banks, "The Mormon Migration into Texas," *The Southern Historical Quarterly*, XLIX (October, 1945), 235.
15. Frederic L Paxson, *History of the American Frontier 1763-1893* (New York, 1942), p. 310.
16. George P. Garrison, *American Commonwealths (Texas A Contest of Civilizations)* (Boston and New York, 1903), pp., 242-3.
17. Rupert Norval Richardson, *Texas the Lone Star State* (New York, 1950), pp. 157-8.
18. See *William Bollaert's Texas*, ed. W. Eugene Hollon and Ruth Lapham Butler (Norman, Oklahoma, 1956).
19. A garbled report of the Mormon negotiations at this time was given in the Lee County *Democrat*, Vol. III, No. 27, published at Fort Madison, Iowa. It states:  
To the Editors of the Bulletin:  
"Gentlemen:—An express has just arrived here from the city of Mexico, bringing the important intelligence that JOE SMITH, the celebrated Mormon Prophet, of the Latter-day Saints, has concluded a treaty with President Santa Anna for the purchase of Texas; for which he agrees to assume ten millions of the Mexican debt to England, and has hypothecated the State of Illinois as collateral security for the faithful redemption of said debt. Commissioners have already been appointed to run the boundary line, &c. General Ampudia and Martin Perfecto de Cos are named on the part of Santa Anna, and PROPHET MILLER and tigertail on the part of JOE SMITH. By a secret article in the treaty it is further stipulated between the high contracting parties that SANTA ANNA shall transport President Houston to the Fiji Islands, within the space of three months, and that all the Negroes in Texas shall be delivered up to Commodore Elliot, of Chinese memory, to be equally divided between LORD BROUGHAM and DANIEL O'COMWELL."—"Mormons in Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, etc. 1844." (News Clippings copied from papers in Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, etc.) Brigham Young University Library, p. 24. This typewritten copy gives the date as January 20, 1844, but this is evidently an error, as it would have been too early to coincide with the facts presented in this paper. The writer has not as yet been able to locate an original copy of this paper."
20. *D.H.C.*, VI, 350-1.
21. Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
22. A document stating his political views in the 1844 campaign.
23. *D.H.C.*, VI, 206
24. "History of Brigham Young," *op. cit*
25. Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
26. *D.H.C.*, VI, 343.
27. *Ibid.*, VI, 274, 275-7, 281-2, 369.
28. *Journal History*, April 25, 1844.
29. *D.H.C.*, VI, 373, 374. Douglas also supplied Hyde with a copy of John C. Fremont map of Oregon and the explorer's report "of the country lying between the Missouri

River and the Rocky Mountains on the line of the Kansas and great Platte rivers.”—*Ibid.*, p. 375.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 356.

31. *Ibid.*, VI, 353.

32. *J.D.*, XIII, 85-6. Some people have attempted to relegate this account to the realm of folklore. There are several facts, however, that support the accuracy of George A. Smith’s statement. It will be recalled that upon reaching the mountains Brigham Young became ill with mountain fever. When his brother Lorenzo Dow Young, approached him and asked if they had come to the end of their journey, Brigham replied: “Brother Lorenzo, when we reach the end of our journey, *I shall know it, AND I DON’T KNOW IT.*”—*Heart Throbs of the West*, ed. Kate B. Carter (Salt Lake City, 1941), III, 328. (Italics by the writer.) Shortly thereafter, when the valley was reached, Wilford Woodruff reported:

“When we came out of the canyon into full view of the valley, I turned the side of my carriage around, open to the west, and President Young arose from his bed and took a survey of the country. While gazing on the scene before us, he was enwrapped in vision for several minutes. He had seen the valley before, in vision; and upon this occasion he saw the future glory of Zion and of Israel as they would be, planted in the valleys of these mountains. When the vision had passed, he said: “It is enough. This is the right place, drive on.”—*The Christmas News*, December 20, 1924. Cited in *Ibid.*

Brigham Young confirmed Woodruff’s account, stating that as he looked upon the valley, “The Spirit of Light rested upon me, and hovered over the valley, and I felt that there the Saints would find protection and safety.”—*Journal History*, July 23, 1847. Erastus Snow also verified Wilford Woodruff’s account, declaring that “President Young said then, and afterwards to all the camp, *that this was the place he had seen long since in vision*; it was here he had seen the tent settling down from heaven and resting, and a voice said unto him: ‘Here is the place where my people of Israel shall pitch their tents.’”—*Utah Pioneers*, 1880, p. 47. Cited in B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church*, III, 279.

Although these statements do not fully coincide with each other and seem to indicate there may have been more than one vision received by Brigham Young, it should be remembered that even though he was very feeble, one of the first things he did was to climb what he then named Ensign Peak. He also expressed the idea, before they had time to explore the region, that the brethren might go out and search for a better site but they would always return and say, “This is the spot for us to locate.”—See Wilford Woodruff’s *Journal*, under date of July 26, 1847, also, Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

33. Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-3.

35. “William Leyland Journal,” cited in “The Lyman Wight Colony in Texas,” p. 21.

After visiting Lyman Wight, Orson Hyde reported to Brigham Young that, “He did not acknowledge you as the first President of the Church. . . . Father John Smith he will obey, he says: and if he should call him to Salt Lake, he would try to go.”—*Journal History*, under date of March 4, 1849.

Wight's reference to John Smith as president of the Fifty raises problem. Joseph Smith was initially chosen as chairman of the General Council; and Brigham Young succeeded him in this position, as well as in the leadership of the Church.

## Chapter 3

### NEW VIEWS ON THE EXODUS

THE GENERAL COUNCIL played an important role in the affairs of the Latter-day Saints under the leadership of Brigham Young, who became “the head” of the council after the death of Joseph Smith.<sup>1</sup> It then became the great colonizer’s responsibility to build up the Kingdom of God according to the pattern that Joseph had set. And he of all men was most aptly fitted for such a task. As a young man he acquired the reputation of being quick and active in mind and mature in judgment. In late years a prominent merchant of Cayuga County, New York—where Brigham had resided for sixteen years prior to 1829—stated with emphasis that “Brigham Young was as fine a specimen of young manhood” as he had ever seen.<sup>2</sup>

In joining the Church, it was Brigham Young’s one desire to learn the doctrines of the kingdom from its modern prophet. Of his experience with Joseph Smith during the Zion’s Camp episode he later said: “I would not exchange the *experience* gained in that expedition for all the wealth in Geauga County [Ohio].”<sup>3</sup> On another occasion he declared:

I have travelled with Joseph a thousand miles. . . . I have watched him and observed everything he said or did. . . . For the town of Kirtland 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 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. It is a God within me, and God upon me; God by day and by night, and it is for his kingdom on the earth.<sup>4</sup>

The success of the exodus is sufficient proof that the modern Moses learned his lessons well. In like manner, Brigham Young sought information from Joseph on other points pertaining to the great latter-day work. In his later life, while referring to Zion’s “principles of government, and how to apply them to families, neighborhoods and nations,” President Young revealed how attentive he had been in learning such 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 the success of your humble servant.<sup>5</sup>

As Brigham Young presented himself before the Saints as their leader and lawgiver in the stead of their martyred Prophet, it is reported by several reliable witnesses that the mantle of Joseph fell upon him with such power that it seemed as though Joseph and not Brigham addressed the Saints that day. This incident was but the great consummation in the merging of Joseph into Brigham. That fusion process had been

going on for some ten years past. And with its completion Brigham Young was prepared to build upon the foundation that Joseph had laid with a minimum of deviation. Thus, in many ways it was Joseph, not Brigham, who launched the exodus and successfully carried it out; it was Joseph, not Brigham, who founded the Saints in the West, in their political as well as in their religious capacity. In this great project, the General Council played a dominant role. As previously noted, it was that body of men who laid the plans for the exodus and thereafter made all major decisions in carrying out the project. This fact has not been known to historians. It appreciably alters the existing concept of the move to the West, in that it indicates that the initiative in these matters was not taken by the Church as a religious body, but by men acting in a political capacity under the direction of the priesthood.

Several notations appear in Brigham Young's *Journal*, indicating the nature and extent of the General Council's activities in planning the exodus. On March 18, 1845, he met with the General Council all day.<sup>6</sup> On the 22nd, he again met with this body; and among other things, "the subject of the western mission was considered and occupied the most of the day."<sup>7</sup> Other meetings followed; and on September 9, 1845, the General Council "Resolved that a company of 1500 men be selected to go to Great Salt Lake valley and that a committee of five be appointed to gather information relative to emigration, and report the same to the council."<sup>8</sup> The forced exodus of the Saints from Nauvoo later altered these plans.

On September 30th, the General Council met at the Seventies Hall. At this meeting, Parley P. Pratt reported that he had made a calculation for an outfit that every family of five persons would require.<sup>9</sup> His report was preliminary to a more complete report made to the council, October 4th. On that date the committee that was appointed by the President to acquire and lay before the council all the necessary information in regard to the outfitting of families for emigration west of the mountains reported their findings, taken "from the best works on the subject."<sup>10</sup>

In planning the exodus, the General Council organized the Saints into companies for the westward journey. A note in the *Journal History* gives the following information of the subject:

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 one hundred families and see that they were prepared for a journey across the Rocky Mountains; afterwards the captains of hundreds selected their own captains of fifties, and tens, clerks, etc.<sup>11</sup>

On January 11, 1846, while the above organizations were being effected, Brigham Young reported that, "The General Council met and arranged to make an early start west."<sup>12</sup> Two days later another council was held in the temple.<sup>13</sup> The latter meeting, according to the diary of Hosea Stout, was also a meeting held by the Council of Fifty.<sup>14</sup> Concerning what then occurred, Brigham Young recorded: "The captains of fifties and tens made reports of the number in their respective companies, who were prepared to

start west immediately, should the persecutions of our enemies compel us to do so: one hundred and forty horses and seventy wagons were reported ready for immediate service.”<sup>15</sup> On January 19th, Hosea Stout reported another meeting of the Council of Fifty. “It was there decided, among other things, that the captains of the different emigrating companies should arrange and prepare as many of their families as [they] could with [out] leaving them to suffer.”<sup>16</sup>

When the exodus commenced, the initial organization effected by the General Council was revised and perfected. Such reorganizations occurred, first, at Sugar Creek, some seven miles from Nauvoo. Here Brigham Young explained that, “The former organization will have nothing to do with our arrangements or traveling on the road. It was only designed to start the order and to organize the people that they might grow into the order that would be.”<sup>17</sup> The next major revision took place at Richardson’s point, about fifty-five miles from Nauvoo.<sup>18</sup> Then, after the pioneers had arrived at the Chariton River, still another reorganization was carried out.<sup>19</sup>

Consistent with the purpose of its organization, the General Council, said Benjamin F. Johnson, directed “all general movements relating to our exodus as a people from Nauvoo.”<sup>20</sup> In carrying out this task, it met frequently during the early period of the exodus. Bishop Miller stated that, “While we were camped on Sugar Creek there was hardly a night without a council.”<sup>21</sup> John D. Lee, as Brigham Young’s clerk, kept minutes of many of these meetings during the early stages of the exodus. He specifically identifies several of these meetings as having been held by the Council of Fifty or General Council. Although he merely designates the meetings held at Sugar Creek as having been held by “the Council,” the minutes indicate that they were meetings of an established body set up to direct the activities of the Saints in all matters pertaining to the move west. There can be little doubt that they were held by the General Council. To quote the minutes of one of these council meetings, 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 oats on tithing. . . .

2nd, the subject of policy and 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 corn meal, 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.

3rd, 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 E. R. Rockwood and J. D. Lee go and examine the tin and ascertain whether they are the articles that this camp needs or not. . . .

4th, the council [decided] that all reports of corn, grain, provisions, wagons, teams, etc. be handed to J. D. Lee.

5th Meeting adjourned [until] 4 eve.<sup>22</sup>

The minutes of the second meeting of the council that day also indicate the nature of that body's work in supervising affairs among the Saints while they were at Sugar Creek. Lee wrote:

At the time previously appointed [i.e. 4:00 p.m.] council convened. 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 council Pres. Br. Young on the subject—as he might have arranged matters that would materially change the face of our movement.

2nd, 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.

3rd, it was moved, seconded and carried that Parley P. Pratt and Amasa 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. Parley P. Pratt, Pres., J. D. Lee, clerk.<sup>23</sup>

When it came to the work of directing the movements of the camp, here again it was the General Council that discussed the subject and issued instructions on such matters. On February 23, 1846, Lee reported the following:

The council convened at 10 morning in Elder Willard Richard's tent. Pres. Brigham Young took the chair and organized the council . . . Pres. B. Young observed that 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 a halt for a season. 4th. 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. Lee, Clerk.<sup>24</sup>

As the exodus progressed, companies of Saints moving west were scattered out over the countryside, making it difficult for all members of the General Council to get together on given occasions. It seems that many within the council were assigned to key positions in the various companies; many captains of hundreds, captains of fifties, and at

least some captains of tens were members of the General Council. Though this arrangement gave central direction to the exodus, it made it difficult for all members of the General Council to get together at any appointed time. Even though many who were thus separated put forth great effort to attend such meetings, at times it was deemed proper not to convene the whole council. On such occasions, only those readily available would meet. In many such cases, John D. Lee would specify who of the Council of the Twelve and who else of the Council of Fifty were present. For example, on April 2, 1846, he wrote:

. . . at 11 a.m. a convention of the council met some 200 yards south of the encampment. Pres[ent] of the Twelve: B. Young, H. C. Kimball, O. Pratt, P. P. Pratt, G. A. Smith. Father John Smith, Bishop Miller, A. P. Rockwood, Shadrack Roundy, B. F. Johnson, [and] J. D. Lee [were also present] of the council of the Y T F I F,<sup>25</sup> Capt. Stuart, Winter, Benson & others. Several letters were laid before the council and one latter was answered to Elder O. Hyde by J. D. Lee, clerk. Council also decided that the camp roll on 5 miles this evening over a bad road before rain and it would reduce the travel for the morrow [from] 19 miles to 14.<sup>26</sup>

On another such occasion Lee wrote:

Sat. Apr. 18, '46. Pleasant Point Encampment. Council convened in the grove west of the encampment at 10 a.m. Present of the Twelve: Pres. B. Young, H. C. Kimball, John Taylor, P. P. Pratt, and Willard Richards. Of the council of the Y T F I F—Bishop Whitney, G. 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 number 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 with our hands as they have been since we started—the teams that were 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 mountain. It was moved by Capt. Markham that the Pres. select such as shall go and not the council. The Pres. said, If you leave it to me I will say that every one that can fit out may go.<sup>27</sup>

The council then turned its attention to more immediate problems then existing within the camp of Israel. The captains of tens were directed to make a study of the needs of their people and report the situation to their respective companies, that the problem of allocating foodstuffs, etc., to those in need might better be facilitated. Agents were sent out to trade with the settlers in the surrounding area for materials needed in the move west. Finally, after taking care of other business then pending, the artillery company was directed to prepare seats in the grove near Brigham Young's encampment, that the Saints might gather for worship the next day. The council then adjourned to meet again the following Monday.<sup>28</sup>

When the council again met, 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 of the “Council of Y T F I F” that were present included Newel K. Whitney, George Miller, Jedediah M. Grant, Peter Haws, Benjamin F. Johnson, John Smith, Charles Spencer, John D. Lee, and two others not clearly identified in Lee’s account. Among other things, reports were read from several companies, giving an account of then circumstances and problems. The request on the part of many persons to return of Nauvoo for one reason or another was considered and instructions given to counsel such persons to stay and plant a crop and promote the work in that particular area.<sup>29</sup>

On April 29, 1846, those available of the General Council again met. After disposing of the business at hand, they turned then attention to their newly designated camping ground. The settlement “was called by the President Garden Grove.” The name was then submitted to the council and sanctioned by the same.<sup>30</sup>

Later when another settlement was contemplated, “a convention of the council” met in the evening of March 8, 1846, to discuss the subject. President Young suggested the propriety of sending two or three men to the north to select the place for a settlement. Accordingly it was decided by the council “that Pres. Young select the men to go and select a place for a settlement.”

After the new settlement had been established at Mount Pisgah an important meeting was held on May 20th, two days after the new site had been designated. Here again, it was impossible to convene the full membership of the General Council.<sup>31</sup> The *Journal History* reports that “Brigham Young met in Council at the Post Office with Elders Heber C. Kimball, Parley P. Pratt, Geo. Smith, Amasa M. Lyman, Willard Richards, Bishops Newel K. Whitney and George Miller, six of the general council and three others.”<sup>32,33</sup> Lee’s report of this meeting is in harmony with that given in the *Journal History*, except that he specifically designates those of the General Council who were present, including the apostles and bishops, who were also members.<sup>34</sup>

During this meeting the council “chatted on various subjects—mostly on the expedition for the mountains.” Heber C. Kimball remarked that to proceed as they were then doing would result in failure to reach their destination. Too many difficulties were being placed in the way of the leading brethren.

Parley P. Pratt suggested that the council use their authority to get the necessary teams to move themselves and as many others as they felt in their wisdom should go to the mountains. George A. Smith stated that he was willing to give up his teams and stay until President Young’s families were removed.

As the discussion continued, it was evident that the council was of the opinion that the President and his families should go and such others as he might select; whereupon Brigham Young stated that he was willing to stay and let those go over the mountains who were ready, but that they would have to be willing to go and make

improvements. If not, they should assist those who did go. After further discussing the subject,

Elder Kimball made a motion to the effect that the Twelve stay here and let those who are ready 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>35</sup>

As the exodus progressed, the previous plans of the council were disrupted by the call for the Mormon Battalion. Here again the General Council played a dominant role in the affairs of the Saints. Said Bishop 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>36</sup>

Although Bishop Miller does not specify that the above took place at a meeting of the General Council, Benjamin F. Johnson specifically states that such was the case. In referring to the Council of Fifty and its consideration of these matters, he said:

To show you that I did know the motive of President Young in sending the Battalion, I will say, that I was one of that special council organized by the Prophet, of which I have written, and of which Brigham Young being the head, I still held my seat and still had a voice in all general movements relating to our exodus as a people from Nauvoo. . . . I was 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>37</sup>

The effort to send a company to the West that year did not materialize. When the General Council met on August 1, 1846, President Young suggested that they consider stopping and prepare for winter. After some discussion, it was decided that it would not be wise for any company to attempt to gain their destination that season. This matter being settled, it was then voted that the Saints keep as close together the coming winter as they conveniently could.<sup>38</sup>

The final arrangements for moving west to the Rocky Mountains were made at Winter Quarters. To this end a series of meetings was held by the General Council in the latter part of December, 1846. Beginning on Christmas day, "the General Council met at Dr. W. Richard's octagon," and held two sessions that day.<sup>39</sup> The following day Brigham Young met with the General Council at 10:00 a.m. and deliberated upon the subject of the gathering of Israel to the mountains. Again two sessions were held, the last of which dismissed at 9:00 p.m.<sup>40</sup> Brigham Young again met with members of the General Council the morning of December 27th. When the council convened that afternoon, Elder Ezra T. Benson was appointed to accompany Bishop George Miller to his encampment at Ponca Village,<sup>41</sup> some one hundred fifty miles or more northwest of Winter Quarters, "at the junction of the Running Water River and the Missouri."<sup>42</sup>

George Miller and James Emmitt, as members of the General Council, had come down from Ponca Village to be in attendance at the above meetings, arriving on Christmas day.<sup>43</sup> Miller later wrote of his activities at the time, stating:

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 Emmit with me (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 action, I, at the receiving of the message, thought I should not go. But 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, help my son home to Ponca Village. . . . Emmitt 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>44</sup>

On January 4, 1847, Brigham Young wrote to Charles C. Rich, at Mount Pisgah, concerning the meetings that had been concluded a few days prior. 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 mountains, on this side; and when 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>45</sup>

The plans made at this time were later altered somewhat, but it is significant that the General Council, consistent with the whole picture of the exodus, was the body that initiated and carried out these final preparations for locating the Saints in the West.

It is also noteworthy that when the revelation known as "The Word and Will of the Lord" was given to the Saints by Brigham Young in January, 1847, setting forth the organization to be followed from that time on in the exodus, the General Council, along with the several bodies of the priesthood, acknowledged it. Said Lee in his *Journal*:

. . . 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>46</sup>

From the facts presented in this chapter it can be concluded that, while priesthood leadership prevailed in the exodus, those acting in and under its authority were not functioning in a religious capacity. The priesthood of Zion was largely functioning in the political sphere of the Kingdom of God during the move to the West. It is little wonder that Ezra T. Benson expressed the thought that during the exodus the Saints were “considered a distinct nation.”<sup>47</sup>

## Chapter Footnotes

1. Johnson to Gibbs, p. 22.
2. From a paper entitled “In the Days of Long Ago,” prepared by William Hayden, an early acquaintance of Brigham Young. This paper was read before the Cayuga county Historical Society and published in *The Auburn Bulletin*, February 17, 1904.
3. *D.H.C.*, II, xxiv.
4. “Salt Lake High Council Record,” MS, (1869-1872), pp. 83-4.
5. *J.D.*, XII, 269-70.
6. *D.H.C.*, VII, 387.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 387-8.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 395, 401, 405, 406-7, 439.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 447.
10. See *Ibid.*, 454-5. There is further evidence to support the fact that the so-called Council of Fifty was the General Council mentioned above. B. H. Roberts identifies it as such. See *ibid.*, p. 439. See also *Journal History*, under date of September 9, 1845. In his diary, Hosea Stout identifies the September 30th meeting as being held by the Council of Fifty. To quote: “Tues. Sept. 30th, 1845. . . went to the Seventies Hall where the Council of 50 were in Session, when I arrived there I was informed by President Jos. Young that [Charles C.] Rich had gone on the hill. I then went to the Temple and there met him.”—“Diary of Hosea Stout,” typewritten copy, Brigham Young University, II, 64.
11. *Journal History*, March 27, 1846. On 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 agents to take abroad with them.”—*Journal History*, under above date. This circular had to do with the exodus west, then being planned. That evening at 7 p.m., President Brigham Young met for council and prayer. After prayer the brethren,  
“ . . . appointed additional captains of hundreds, making twenty-five companies, as follows: 1st, the Twelve; 2nd, Samuel Bent; 3rd, Alpheus Cutler; 4th, Isaac Morley; 5th, Shadrach Roundy; 6th, Reynolds Cahoon; 7th, Daniel Spencer; 8th, Peter Haws; 9th, Joseph Fielding; 10th, John D. Parker; 11th, David Fullmer; 12th, Charles Shumway; 13th, Charles C. Rich; 14th, Jedediah M. Grant; 15th, Erastus Snow; 16th, Benjamin F. Johnson; 17th, Andrew H. Perkins; 18th, George Coulson; 19th, David Evans; 20th, Daniel C. Davis; 21st, Jonathan H. Hale; 22nd, George P. Dykes (Ottoway); 23rd, Mephiboseth Serrine, (Michigan); 24th, Hosea Stout; 25th, Wm. Huntington.”—*Journal History*, under above date; *D.H.C.*, VII, 481-2.

12. *D.H.C.*, VII, 567; *Journal History*, January 11, 1846.
13. *D.H.C.*, VII, 567.
14. On January 13, 1846, Stout wrote:

“. . . went to . . . the temple at ten o'clock and met with the Council of Fifty. This is the first time which ever I met with that council.

“The subject of our removal west was discussed and . . . well entertained.”—”Diary of Hosea Stout,” II, under above date.
15. *D.H.C.*, VII, 567.
16. “Diary of Hosea Stout,” II, January 19, 1846. There may be some discrepancy between Stout’s date for this meeting and that given by Brigham Young. The latter stated that on the nineteenth the temple was engaged for other purposes which could have prevented a meeting of the council there on that date. On the eighteenth, however, he reported:

“A meeting of the captains of Emigrating 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 council, every man felt willing to yield to the circumstances that surround 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 aid such in emigrating as may have to go, it was agreed that they should have letters of attorney to authorize them to act for us legally.”—*D.H.C.*, VII, 569.
17. John D. Lee, “Diaries and Official Records of John D. Lee, 1844-1846, 1850-1851, 1861-1878,” unpublished diaries, minutes, etc. kept by Lee during the above years (not complete), Brigham Young University Library, February 17, 1846.
18. *Journal History*, March 27, 1848. See Lee, “Diaries and Official Records of John D. Lee,” March 9, 1846, where he indicates that the “Council” made the decision to reorganize at this point.
19. *Journal History*, March 27, 1846. This reorganization also was effected by the council.
20. Johnson to Gibbs, pp. 22-3.
21. Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-3.
22. “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.
23. *Ibid.*, under the above date.
24. *Ibid.*, under the above date.
25. These letters reversed spell FIFTY, Lee’s way, at times, of designating the Council of Fifty.
26. “Diary of John D. Lee, 1844, 1846, 1850-1851,” April 2, 1846.
27. *Ibid.*, under the above date.
28. *Idem.*
29. *Ibid.*, under date of April 20, 1846.

30. *Ibid.*, under above date.
31. A term used to designate the General Council. See “Diary of John D. Lee, 1844, 1846, 1850-1851,” under date of May 20, 1846. See also *Journal History*, under date of May 20, 1846, where the meeting Lee designates is seen to be the General Council or at least a group of its members.
32. “Diary of John D. Lee, 1844, 1846, 1850-1851,” under date of May 8, 1846.
33. *Journal History*, May 20, 1846.
34. “Diary of John D. Lee, 1844, 1846, 1850-1851,” under same date.
35. “Diaries and Official Records of John D. Lee,” May 20, 1846; *Journal History*, May 20, 1846.
36. Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
37. Johnson to Gibbs, pp. 22-3.
38. “Diaries and Official Records of John D. Lee,” August 1, 1846. The following day, when the General Council again met, a letter was written to Colonel Thomas L. Kane informing him of this decision.—*Ibid.*, August 2, 1846.
39. *Journal History*, December 25, 1846.
40. *Ibid.*, December 26, 1846.
41. *Ibid.*, December 27, 1846.
42. See Roberts, *op. cit.*, 149, 157.
43. *Journal History*, January 4, 1847.
44. Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-9. Miller at this time was fast becoming disaffected in his feelings toward the Church and was shortly thereafter excommunicated. The final break in his relationship with the Church came in April, 1847, when he came out in open opposition to the Authorities and informed them that the Saints should settle in the area of Texas. Brigham Young notes on April 2, 1847:  
“ . . . I met with the brethren of the twelve Apostles, Bishop Whitney and Miller and others. Bishop Geo. Miller gave his views relative to the Church moving to Texas to the country lying between the Neuces and the Rio Grande. I informed Bishop Miller that his views were wild and visionary, when we moved hence it would be in the Great Basin where the Saints would soon form a nucleus of strength and power sufficient to cope with mobs.”—“History of Brigham Young,” under above date.
45. *Journal History*, January 4, 1847.
46. John D. Lee, *Journals of John D. Lee*, ed. Charles Kelley (Salt Lake City, 1938), p. 53.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

## Chapter 4

# NEW VIEWS ON THE ORIGIN OF GOVERNMENT IN THE GREAT BASIN

WHEN the origin of political government in Salt Lake Valley and adjacent areas is analyzed in light of the purpose for which the General Council was organized and its later activities, an entirely different picture is presented on this subject from what has been previously seen. Heretofore historians have taken the view that government in Great Salt Lake Valley was merely a "spontaneous government" that grew out of the immediate needs of the settlers, representing "a maximum of practical reality and a minimum of political theory."<sup>1</sup> Also, it has been assumed that up until the spring of 1849 "the mode of government in Salt Lake Valley was purely an ecclesiastical regime."<sup>2</sup> These views must now be modified to show a more accurate picture of the formation of government in the Great Basin and the role of the General Council as it acted in these matters.

In August, 1847, Brigham Young left Salt Lake Valley to return to Winter Quarters. Before leaving, however, he commenced effecting an organization to govern and direct those who were to remain in the valley, in their religious as well as in their civil activities. On August 22nd, he declared:

It is the right of the Twelve to nominate the officers and the people to receive them. We wish to know who is coming in the next company. If Uncle John Smith comes, it is our minds that he preside.<sup>3</sup>

After leaving the valley, the returning group met a westbound company near South Pass, of which John Smith was a member. The following day, September 6th, a meeting was held, at which time there was nominated "a president, a High Council, and a marshal for G.S.L. City."<sup>4</sup> Three days later Brigham Young addressed an epistle to those in the valley, stating:

It is wisdom that certain officers should exist among you, to preside during our absence, and we would nominate John Smith to be your president, with liberty for him to select his two counselors, and we would suggest the names of Chas. C. Rich and John Young. We would nominate Henry G. Sherwood, Thos. Grover, Levi Jackman, John Murdock, Daniel Spencer, Stephen Abbott, Ira Eldredge, Edison Whipple, Shadrach Roundy, John Vance, Willard Snow, and Abraham O. Smoot for a High Council; whose duty it will be to observe those principles which have been instituted in the Stakes of Zion for the government of the Church, and to pass such laws and ordinances as shall be necessary for the peace and prosperity of the city for the time being. . . .<sup>5</sup>

It should be noted that John Smith and Charles C. Rich of the newly proposed stake presidency were also members of the General Council. They could, then, act in the dual capacity of civil and ecclesiastical authority.<sup>6</sup>

At a meeting in the valley on October 3, 1847, the above nominations were ratified by the people. In addition to these officers, Charles C. Rich, who had been the commander of the first artillery company of the pioneers, was elected chief military commander; John Van Cott, marshal; and Albert Carrington, clerk, historian, and deputy postmaster.<sup>7</sup>

Later, when Brigham Young and others of the General Council were permanently located in the valley, the council took over the direction of the civic affairs of the people throughout the area. On December 9, 1848, Brigham Young reported that, "A council meeting, which was continued all day, was held at Heber C. Kimball's house."<sup>8</sup> In his *Journal*, John D. Lee reports that this was a meeting of the Council of Fifty, and that at that time the council "took into consideration" the propriety of petitioning Congress for a territorial government, with officers of their "own nomination." The boundaries of the proposed territory were discussed and probably set. The name the council proposed for the new government was Deseret. Brigham Young was nominated governor; Willard Richards, secretary; Heber C. Kimball, chief judge; Newel K. Whitney and Parley P. Pratt, associate judges; and John M. Bernhisel, marshal. John M. Bernhisel, Daniel H. Wells, and Joseph L. Heywood were appointed a committee to draft a petition to Congress expressing the desires of the people for such a government. John Taylor, Amasa M. Lyman, Daniel H. Wells, John D. Lee, John Fielding, Reynolds Cahoon, Jedediah M. Grant, William W. Phelps, John S. Fullmer, and Charles Shumway were appointed a committee to obtain the signatures of all the inhabitants of the valley and surrounding areas, to be included in the petition to Congress.<sup>9</sup>

At a meeting of the council, December 16th, Bernhisel, Wells, and Heywood read a draft of the proposed petition to Congress for a territorial government, after which it was discussed. Parley P. Pratt was then added to the committee and the decision was made to have the committee give further consideration to the document. On the following January 6th, the revised petition, along with an outline of the boundaries of the proposed territory, was read by the committee and accepted by the council. Dr. Bernhisel was delegated to carry the petition to Washington and there represent the interests of the people in these matters.<sup>10</sup>

It was no doubt during the month of December, 1848, that the General Council incorporated itself into the provincial legislature of the State of Deseret. Benjamin F. Johnson later wrote: "This council, as a legislature of the people, did continue under the Presidency of the Church and became the Colonial Council, or Legislature of the State of Deseret."<sup>11</sup> Said Johnson on another occasion: "The Colonial Council or Legislature of Deseret, I think was organized in December, 1848, to which I was *elected* and held membership through the colonial period."<sup>12</sup>

Though these statements were made several years afterward and may be open to question as to their accuracy, existing evidence supports the truth of Johnson's report. When John D. Lee made mention of the Council of Fifty, in December, 1848, he began by explaining that this council was considered as the "Municipal department of the Kingdom of God . . . from which all law emanates, for the rule, government, and control

of all nations, kingdoms, and tongues and people under the whole heavens."<sup>13</sup> Since this was the prevailing view, it would only be logical that law and government in the Great Basin should likewise stem from this body. Why, then, should not the General Council set about incorporating itself into a regularly constituted government at an early date? The fact that Lee mentioned the governmental concept of the political kingdom at this time argues that organizational developments were being carried out to expand the powers of the council consistent with the pattern set by Joseph Smith.<sup>14</sup>

Probably the most conclusive evidence supporting the above view is the fact that the terminology Lee used in designating the functions of the General Council after December, 1848, sounds much as if it had become a legislative body. Consider the following:

*January 6th. A convention of the Council* assembled at H. C. Kimball's house at which council the pe[ti]tion and bounds of the Territory or Country pe[ti]tioned for was read by the Committee, and accepted by the *House*. . . .<sup>15</sup>

. . . The above took place on the 20th Jany., at a *convention of the Council*, which dissolved to Feb. 3rd, 1849, at the house of H. C. Kimball.<sup>16</sup>

*Feb. 3rd. '49.* At 10 morning the con[v]e[n]tion of the Council met at Elder H. C. Kimball's. The *House* having been called and duly opened by prayer, the subject of securing the *public arm[s]* was taken up. . . .<sup>17</sup>

*Sat., Feb. 17, '49.* . . 1st business before the *House* was the reports of the committees. Jos. L. Heywood reported that he had [let] out the building of the bridge over the river Jordan to Elder John Taylor at \$700, to be complete within one month. . . .

Second, Daniel H. Spencer, Chairman of the committee of the Big Field fence reported. . . .

3rdly, Albert Carrington, chairman on the committee of weights & measures, reported. . . .<sup>18</sup>

Sat., Feb. 24th. . . . at 9 a.[m.] *convention of the Legislation council* met at W. W. Phelps's school room. The *House* called to order. . . .

The *House* then proceeded to business. The committee on the fencing of the town lots report[e]d. . . .

3rdly, the committee sel[e]cted to lay out a burying ground reported. . . .

4th, J. D. Lee reported that the committee on fencing for the South Field met. . . .

Met a[t] 30 m. to 2. Voted that any person or persons that shall hereafter be found riding a horse or mule that does not belong to he, she, [sic] or them shall upon conviction

before the proper authority be fined not less than 25 dollars for each offense, and all damage, one half to the *Public Treasury*, the other to the complainant.<sup>19</sup>

Sat., March 3rd. J. D. Lee *met in Legislative capacity with the council of Fifty* at the Wm. W. Phelps School Room. . . . At 2 p.m. the council was called together and some tall speeches were made relative to the duties and powers of this Council, by E. Snow and others. Repeated the Name of this council (SS) [viz.]: Verily thus saith the Lord, by this name ye shall be called, The Kingdom of God and its laws and justice and judgment in my hands. Signed Ah Man, Christ. . . .

. . . voted that the Marshall should receive his commission from this council, and signed by the chairman, and counter signed by the clerk, and that he have a right to appoint Deputy Marshalls who shall receive their commissions in like manner.<sup>20</sup>

That the General Council was acting as a colonial legislature during the winter of 1848-49 is also evident by the report, that on March 9, 1849, "The *Legislative Council of the State of Deseret* passed the following:"

#### AN ORDINANCE, ORGANIZING THE NAUVOO LEGION

That a committee of three be appointed to organize, or authorize others to organize, all male inhabitants of the valley of the Great Salt Lake, who are able-bodied men, over fourteen, and under seventy-five years of age, into different companies, the whole to form an entire Military Organization of the people, under the name of the Nauvoo Legion.

Whereupon Amasa M. Lyman, Charles C. Rich and Daniel H. Wells, were appointed said Committee.<sup>21</sup>

The above was the official announcement of the action of the "Legislative Council." Actually, the decision to organize the legion was made six days before, when the above action was taken in a council meeting specifically identified by John D. Lee as the Council of Fifty.<sup>22</sup> Here again we have confirmation that this body became, as Johnson stated, the "Colonial Council or Legislature of Deseret."<sup>23</sup> The fact that they enacted this ordinance several days before the executive officers of the forthcoming government of Deseret were elected and more than three and one-half months before the "State" government began officially to function indicates that the legislative division of that government had been in existence for some time. Furthermore, after Brigham Young commenced attending to the organization of the Nauvoo Legion, on March 16, 1849,<sup>24</sup> the General Council assisted in the task. In the early part of the following May, Lee reported:

. . . The Council was required to meet the Brethren at the sta. . . . and . . . to organize them into a military body. The band and marshals . . . musick was prepared for the occasion. There was about 10 cos. organized and officers elected over them.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, proof that the General Council became the legislative branch of the government of Deseret some time before the latter was officially organized lies in the fact that the record is conspicuously silent on the subject of how the General Assembly of the State of Deseret came into being. "It would be interesting to know how members of the General Assembly were selected." Dale Morgan comments. "There is no record of an election."<sup>26</sup>

During the period between December, 1848, and the formal inauguration of the State of Deseret the following spring, the General Council was busy with the activities of government in the Great Basin. On January 6, 1849, they met at the house of Heber C. Kimball and resolved that "the High Council be relieved from municipal duties." This action officially terminated the fifteen-month period during which the high council directed civil as well as ecclesiastical affairs in the valley. From that time until the organization of the State of Deseret the General Council resumed the functions of government among the Saints.<sup>27</sup>

During the January 6th meeting, several problems were discussed and acted upon by the General Council. The question of how best to care for the cattle in the basin came up. As a result of the council's deliberations, a committee of ten men was appointed to visit Utah Valley and ascertain its utility as a cattle range at that time of the year. The committee set out the next day and returned January 10th with an unfavorable report.<sup>28</sup>

Because of existing circumstances, an inflationary trend was developing, particularly in the article of beef. Those who had fat cattle for sale were "grinding the face of the poor." The problem was discussed in the January 6th meeting of the council. Some members of that body were in favor of passing laws to regulate prices in certain areas. But Brigham Young, whose opinion prevailed, suggested that they let trade seek its own level and handle the situation through non-legislative measures.<sup>29</sup>

Steps were also taken in the above meeting to encourage the development of various industries in the valley. Sheep were to be imported, and fisheries and a tannery were to be established. The council pledged its influence to sustain those who undertook to develop these enterprises. But when a tanner sought for a guaranteed remuneration "the council decided not to do it, but that he should have the business on his own responsibility."<sup>30</sup> The council also acted to regulate the use to be made of public lands. It then ordained "that the Kirtland bank bills be put into circulation for the accommodation of the people, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Joseph Smith that the Kirtland notes would one day be as good as gold."<sup>31</sup> Nor did the council fail to recognize that it had the responsibility to promote good morals within the society. It voted to raze some fort buildings in order to suppress the "progress of iniquity" that was developing in those places.<sup>32</sup>

The first item of business considered in the January 20th meeting was to vote that John Young become a member of the council. The situation of the cattle was then discussed, and the committee, having given a further report on the proposal to move them to Utah Valley, was discharged. The council next discussed the need for an armorer to

take charge of public arms; and, accordingly, Thomas Tanner was appointed. It also was "voted that a building be erected forthwith for an armory." Reynolds Cahoon was chosen to supervise its construction and Thomas Bullock was appointed Treasurer. The sum of \$32.00 was subscribed by the council towards the expenses of the building.<sup>33</sup>

The scarcity of foodstuffs among the people was reconsidered in the February 3rd meeting of the General Council, along with the inflationary trends that were then current. The nature of this problem, along with the action of the council in providing a solution, was reported by Brigham Young, as follows:

The winter proving severer than the preceding one, had led the brethren to expect that more sustenance was required by man and animals than was anticipated, and much of the past season's crops, the sole reliance of the colony, was destroyed by crickets. The immigrants, too, who arrived from Winter Quarters the past fall, instead of bringing with them eighteen months provisions, as they had been instructed to do, brought much less, and that limited stock was reduced beyond their anticipation by their enormous appetites, induced by the continuous toil-some journey and the keen mountain air. So by this time many families were destitute of provisions, and it was evident that something must be done for their relief. The council, therefore, resolved that no corn should be made into whiskey, and that if any man was preparing to distill corn into whiskey or alcohol, the corn should be taken and given to the poor; that the Bishops should ascertain the true situation of the people in relation to breadstuffs and what amount each family had per head, and report to the next council.<sup>34</sup>

John D. Lee reported that in the above meeting the council concluded that there was probably sufficient food in the valley to sustain the people until more could be raised, providing it could be equally distributed. Fear, not genuine scarcity, he reports Parley P. Pratt as suggesting, was the greatest problem.<sup>35</sup>

Besides the above, the council acted on two other important matters during this meeting. First, it established a standard weight for wheat and corn in the area, the former being set at 60 lbs. a bushel and the latter at 56 lbs. a bushel. Albert Carrington, Joseph L. Heywood, and Philip B. Lewis were also appointed as a committee on weights and measures, with Lewis as "sealer thereof." The next item had to do with the need for fencing certain lands in the area. And Daniel Spencer, Edward Hunter, John Vance, and William M. Lemon were "appointed to superintend and apportion the fencing to be made in the different districts."<sup>36</sup>

When the "Council of YTFIF met agreeable to adjournment" on February 9th, the "committee on bread stuffs reported that there was in the valley 78/100 of a pound of breadstuffs per head per day for the next five months, corn and wheat being rated at only 50 lbs. per bushel." The council considered this amount to be sufficient.<sup>37</sup>

They next turned their attention to the need for constructing a bridge across the Jordan River. It was estimated that the project would cost from "\$700 to \$800, mechanics' wages being rated at \$1.50 to \$2.00 per day." Concerning the further

consideration given to the building and maintenance of roads at this meeting, the *Journal History* states:

It was resolved that a tax of one per cent per annum be assessed on property, to repair the public highways, bridges, and other works; that Albert Carrington be assessor, collector, and treasurer, with certain discretionary powers in collecting from the poor and widows; that the supervisor draw upon him for funds, and that once a year one or two auditors be appointed to audit his accounts. The clerks of the council were instructed to write eight notices, containing the laws made by the Council, for posting up in different places for the information of the public.<sup>38</sup>

The council was also confronted with the problem of getting certain ones within the valley to accept the paper currency used as a medium of exchange. On February 3rd, the subject was discussed; and it was proposed that the licensed butchers who refused to accept this currency be required to give up their licenses. But at the February 9th meeting the report was made that "the butchers were willing to accede to the request of the council, respecting the taking of paper money."<sup>39</sup>

When the General Council met on February 17th, the subject of building a bridge across the Jordan River was again taken up. John D. Lee reports that John Taylor remarked that upon examination, the bed on the river where the bridge was designed to be built would not admit the building of a bridge at that point, because of a twelve-foot layer of quicksand. After some discussion on the subject, John Taylor, Daniel H. Wells, and Jedediah M. Grant were appointed a committee to locate the site for the bridge.<sup>40</sup> The committee for fencing the Big Field then reported "that the fence would include 291 ten-acre lots, 460 five-acre lots, the Church farm of 800 acres, and 17 acres of fractional lots, the whole requiring 5240 rods of fencing, of which 3217 were recommended to be built of adobies, 633 of adobies and stone, and 1361 of ditch and posts and rails."<sup>41</sup>

Besides reporting the above action with some deviation on statistics, Lee records that the council considered an item of business in this session not mentioned in the *Journal History*. It had to do with establishing a system of weights and measures throughout the area. The committee assigned to this responsibility reported that they had examined the different systems in the world and found the "French Standard" to be the most correct and simple. In the discussion that ensued, C. P. Lott declared that he was opposed to adopting the system of any nation, and suggested that they set up a system of their own that could be a pattern to the nations. Brigham Young then gave his view: that he wanted the weights and measures to be arranged upon "the most easy, simple, plain system that could be had." The discussion seems to have concluded at this point.<sup>42</sup>

During the afternoon session, Daniel Spencer, David Fullmer and Willard Snow were appointed a committee to direct the locating of streets through the city and the fencing of the survey south of the Big Field. Whether this action had anything to do with the following report given by Lee is not clear. He wrote that the council,

Moved and 2nd that a committee of 3 be appointed to take into consideration the interest of the South Farm, to proportion to each man the number of rods of fence to make, to dictate how it shall be made and to inspect it when done. Carried unanimously. Pres. Young said that he would let Bro. A. Lyman nominate that committee: James M. Flake, Wm. Crowsby and John D. Lee, Pres. B. Young said that he had no objection to the men, provided J. D. Lee is chairman of that committee, and further said that when a man was taken out of this council to do business, let that man be the chairman of whatever committee he may belong [to]; thus the chairman can report to the council.<sup>43</sup>

It may be that the above decision, which is not reported in the *Journal History*, could have led to a policy of utilizing the services of capable men outside the council in carrying out specific assignments.

Both of the above sources report that during the afternoon session of the February 17th meeting, Brigham Young was appointed "a committee of one" to erect a public bathhouse at the Warm Springs. Lee adds that it was to be erected out of public funds. President Young was also granted the privilege of building a mill in the ravine, "east of Chase's mill, and of taking the water out of the Big Canyon creek to run the mill, except when needed for irrigation."

In addition to the foregoing business, the *Journal History* reports that "Daniel H. Wells, Joseph L. Heywood and Geo. B. Wallace were appointed a committee to select a suitable place for a burying ground." While Lee does not confirm this action, he reports another item of business not mentioned in the *Journal History*: that the council voted to open the "9th East Street" and to erect a bridge over Canyon Creek immediately. At 6:00 p.m., the meeting was adjourned, to convene again on Saturday, February 24, 1849.<sup>44</sup>

The first item of business considered at the meeting of the General Council, February 24, 1849,<sup>45</sup> was a petition by Robert Crow and others<sup>46</sup> for "permission for the Presidency and council of the Church to go to the California gold mines, to dig gold under sanction of the authorities of the Church." After some discussion, the group was advised to stay in the valley and raise grain.

Lee's minutes of the meeting includes reports by three committees as the next business of the council. The committee on fencing town lots reported that the city had been divided into wards and that each ward would be fenced separately;<sup>47</sup> the committee appointed to select a site for a cemetery reported that it had been hampered in accomplishing its task by snow; and, the committee in charge of fencing the South Field reported that they had commenced work.

The council then established fines for driving animals from the range, or using them without the consent of the owner. Lee reports the full action of the council as follows:

Vote that any person or persons that shall hereafter be found riding a horse or mule that does not belong to he, she, [sic] or them shall upon conviction before the proper

authority be fined not less than 25 dollars for each offense, and all damage, one half to the Public Treasury, the other to the complainant. Also any person or persons that shall drive off any horses or mules to the Fort or from their range any cattle, shall upon conviction as before be fined 5 dollars for each head.<sup>48</sup>

The council next turned its attention to a matter of disorderly conduct that had recently occurred, involving some young men who had been with the Mormon Battalion. They were fined \$25.00 each. Since their actions violated the moral standards of the community, Lee reports that the council also voted "that they all be cut off from the church." Finally, after appointing Horace S. Eldredge marshal of Great Salt Lake Valley, ordaining that bridges be built across the Cottonwood creeks and other streams as the convenience of the people required, and considering a few other matters of similar importance, the council adjourned to meet again on Saturday, March 3, 1849.<sup>49</sup>

When "the Council of Fifty" met on March 3rd, it was voted "that Horace S. Eldredge receive a diploma from the council, as marshal of the valley of G. S. L. and that he have the privilege of deputing men to assist him, also that all such documents be signed by the President of the council and countersigned by the clerk." Most of the forenoon was spent deliberating upon the matter of enforcing justice in cases where men had violated the standards of the society to the point where they were considered worthy of the death penalty. It was pointed out that, according to revelation, the very name of the council was, "The Kingdom of God and its laws and justice and judgment in my [God's] hands." This being true, should "the members of this council suffer their sympathy to arise to the extent that mercy will rob justice of its claims, suffering infernals, thieves, murderers, whoremongers" and other such characters to live, "adding sin to sin, crime to crime, corrupting the morals of the people when their blood ought to flow to atone for their crimes[?]"<sup>50</sup>

In the afternoon session, several matters were considered and passed upon by the council. Petitions for land grants by Daniel Russell and Benjamin F. Johnson were approved. The sum of \$100.00 was appropriated to the use of the clerk of the council, for his services. A petition by Reynolds Cahoon for \$15.00 from the public treasury was approved for construction of the arsenal he had been commissioned to build. The destruction of predatory animals in the area was considered. Some time prior to this meeting two hunting companies had been organized under the leadership of John Pack and John D. Lee, each company consisting of some one hundred men. On March 1st, it was reported that Pack's men had killed 3,222 more animals and birds than Lee's company. Evidently the complete count was not made at that time, however, since the council voted on March 3rd "that those persons who had not already reported the amount of game they had killed in the late hunt, have the privilege of counting the same on the following Monday at the Council House."<sup>51</sup>

The next item of business before the council was a report by Daniel H. Wells that the committee responsible for locating a cemetery site had selected a twenty-acre plot northeast of the city. Following Wells' report, the council voted to organize the Nauvoo Legion, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The matter of operating ferries on the North

Fork of the Platte and on the Green River was then taken up; and President Young was appointed to take care of this business. Accordingly, he appointed Parley P. Pratt to take a company and proceed to the Green River; and Orrin P. Rockwell, Charles Shumway, and Edmund Ellsworth were chosen to go to the upper ferry on the North Fork of the Platte.<sup>52</sup> The council then "voted that the public be informed that the mail will start for Winter Quarters on the 20th of March, if possible, or as soon thereafter as practicable." Allen Compton was delegated to take charge of said mail. Finally, the subject of sending teams back to assist the immigrants was discussed. Parley P. Pratt and Daniel H. Wells were appointed to write to the Church Authorities in Iowa, informing them of the circumstances of the Saints in the valley and the "almost impossibility of their sending back any assistance." The council then adjourned to meet again the following day at the home of Heber C. Kimball.<sup>53</sup>

The meeting of the council March 4, 1849 was a very important one. It was here that further plans for establishing the State of Deseret were made. The *Journal History* reports:

The council met in Heber C. Kimball's house at 9:30 a.m., and voted that the marshal give notice to the people of the valley of the G.S.L. and vicinity, that a public meeting would be held at the meeting ground in the old Fort, on Monday, the 12th day of March, at 10 o'clock a.m., for the purpose of electing and appointing officers for the government of the people in the valley of G.S.L. and vicinity, until the petition of the people be granted by the United States for a Territorial Government.<sup>54</sup>

In the afternoon session, the council again turned its attention to the work of organizing the forthcoming government; and "the subject of nominating officers for election for a provisional government was presented." It was then "voted that the names *already approved* be brought before the people for their ratification."<sup>55</sup> These names were no doubt those considered by the council for positions in the government of Deseret during the meeting of December 8, 1848. It will be recalled that at that earlier meeting John M. Bernhisel was nominated as marshal. At the March 4th meeting, it was "voted that the name of John M. Bernhisel be substituted by that of Horace S. Eldredge for marshal, for the time being." The *Journal History* record of this substitution confirms Lee's report that in general the officers of the proposed government had been considered for nomination at the December meeting. In the latter meeting of the council, it was also reported that "Albert Carrington said he wished to resign his office as public treasurer." The council accepted his resignation and "voted that Newel K. Whitney succeed him."<sup>56</sup> Here again is evidence of a prior nomination of officers by the council.

The appointment of deputy marshals also was considered at the March 4th meeting; and Lewis Robinson, George D. Grant, John Scott, Edward Ellsworth, Charles Shumway, George W. Langley, John Nebeker, Orrin P. Rockwell, Almon L. Fullmer, and Isaac C. Haight were named to fill this office. The council also "voted that the names of Bishops be placed on the list, as magistrates for their respective wards in the city and vicinity." Then, after voting that Daniel Spencer, David Fuller, and Willard Snow be judges of the election, the council appointed a committee of five "to fill out the ticket for

the ensuing election" William W. Phelps, Amasa M. Lyman, John Taylor, Parley P. Pratt, and Jedediah M. Grant made up this committee.<sup>57</sup>

The organization of the government of Deseret presents an interesting and somewhat perplexing picture to the student of history. In implementing the organization of the new state, the Saints were faced with two alternatives: First, they could have followed a procedure that would have been in full harmony with the theory and philosophy of the Kingdom of God; that is, they could have utilized theocratic procedures to accomplish the task. To do so would have made the origin of Deseret unique. And it would no doubt have brought criticism upon the Mormon leaders from unsympathetic sources. Such criticism would have operated against them in their efforts to unite with the Federal Union as a new state. They were aware of this.

In the second alternative, they could have used the popular democratic procedures of the day to effect the birth of Deseret. The natural tendency to utilize these procedures was very strong. There were those among the leading brethren who were college men, indoctrinated in the prevailing views on law and government. It is one thing to conceive a new theory of operation, they might well have argued, and another fully to implement it in fact, particularly where there may be some doubt at the time as to the wisdom of strictly following the new course. Even though the detailed facts surrounding the conflict that arose over these two established procedures are not known, the picture is clear that such a conflict did exist. In the final outcome, the former procedure predominated; but the latter theory was not without its influence.

It has been noted that steps were taken by the General Council as early as December, 1848 to organize the government of Deseret. In these arrangements, men were to be named to political office theocratically. Some credence, however, was later given to the question of utilizing democratic procedures in these matters. On February 1, 1849, a document signed by "many citizens" was made public, which stated: "Notice is hereby given to all the citizens of this portion of Upper California, lying east of the Sierra Nevada Mountains that a convention will be held at the Great Salt Lake City, in said Territory, on Monday, the fifth day of March next, for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of organizing a Territorial or State government."<sup>58</sup>

Whether or not the above action was initiated by the General Council is not clear. But it was a fact that several of the council's leading members were involved in it, as they participated prominently in the convention when it met. Neff notes the democratic overtones of the convention by observing: "By careful design, and thoughtful observance of the calendar, the convention was timed to convene March 5th, the same day that General Zachary Taylor succeeded James K. Polk as president of the United States."<sup>59</sup>

When the convention met, its actions were strictly democratic. There is no indication of priesthood control as such. Those present first "organized themselves into a Convention, by electing Daniel Spencer, Chairman; William Clayton, Secretary; Thomas Bullock, Assistant Secretary of said Convention; and Horace S. Eldredge, as Marshal." Then, after "several addresses and deliberations," a committee of ten was appointed to

draft and report to the convention a constitution, "under which the inhabitants of said Territory may organize and govern themselves, until the Congress of the United States shall otherwise provide by law." Accordingly, the chairman appointed Albert Carrington, Joseph L. Heywood, William W. Phelps, David Fullmer, John S. Fullmer, Charles C. Rich, John Taylor, Parley P. Pratt, John M. Bernhisel, and Erastus Snow members of this committee.<sup>60</sup> It is to be noted that four of the above men were apostles; and they, with others of the committee, were members of the General Council.

After the above appointments had been made, the convention adjourned until March 8th, at which time it was again in session until the 10th, when the Constitution was adopted. Among other things, it provided that an election for "members of the General Assembly, and other officers under this Constitution, shall be held on the first Monday of May next" (May 7, 1849).<sup>61</sup> This provision was in direct conflict with the previous decision of the General Council to hold the election March 12, 1849.

It may be that the convention leaders felt that to hold the election according to the prior plans of the General Council would be acting too hastily. Two days is hardly enough time successfully to plan and carry out such an election. But there was more than a conflict of dates involved. The new Constitution called for an election of the General Assembly, along with the executive officers in the new government, while the council was evidently only planning to present the names of those to fill the latter offices to the people for their vote of approval or disapproval. Had the provision of the constitution been followed, it might have disrupted the council in its established authority in the area of government, or at least made it necessary to re-elect officers who might have been previously elected to the legislature.<sup>62</sup> To avoid such possible eventualities, the General Council maintained its decision to hold the election March 12th.

At its meeting, March 10th, the day the convention completed its business, William W. Phelps of the council's committee on elections, "presented the election ticket" to the General Council. His report was accepted; and two days later the election was held in the Bowery, at which time 674 votes were polled in favor of the following ticket: Governor, Brigham Young; Secretary, Willard Richards; Chief Justice, Heber C. Kimball; Associate Justices, Newel K. Whitney and John Taylor; Marshal, Horace S. Eldredge; Attorney General, Daniel H. Wells; Assessor and Collector, Albert Carrington; Treasurer, Newel K. Whitney; Supervisor of Roads, Joseph L. Heywood. Magistrates also were elected for the several organized wards in the vicinity.<sup>63</sup>

The question might be asked, Why did the General Council seemingly allow its political position to be challenged by courting the idea that the popular procedures of the day could be reconciled, in the organization of Deseret, with procedural patterns inherent in their ideal of government under the Kingdom of God? Certainly the leading brethren had—or could have had—control over the situation. There is no recorded expression of conflict—no rebuke, no chastisement—only the facts of the situation as recorded in the written record.

This strange phenomenon might at least partially be explained by noting, first, that it was not considered proper for the new government to be established through arbitrary means. Joseph Smith and his associates continually held that the Government of God would rise to prominence and spread its powers abroad only as sufficient people embraced and supported its program. Although they were dedicated to their ideal, the Mormon leaders were not a group of religious fanatics. They were well aware of the popular prejudice that existed against them and their cause. As long as such prejudice continued to exist, they need be in no hurry to emphasize the theocratic aspects of the Government of God.

The second point to keep in mind is the Mormon view that there was a strong possibility that the Government of God would only rise to power after other governments throughout the world had been broken by warfare and reduced to chaos. The period of latter-day warfare had not yet arrived; and even though the Saints often spoke of the anticipated destructions as a possible part of the great drama of the future when the Kingdom of God would rise to world prominence, there was no need of over-anticipating the expected consummation. Here again was reason for not implementing the Government of God in its theocratic aspects. Had not the Lord said by way of revelation: "Wherefore, be subject to the powers that be, until he reigns whose right it is to reign, and subdues all enemies under his feet."<sup>64</sup> That they were dedicated to such a policy is evident from the fact that they merely sought to establish a government in the valley "until the Congress of the United States should otherwise provide for the Government of the Territory hereinafter named and described, by admitting us into the Union."<sup>65</sup>

Even though the new constitution made a concession to the world by providing for democratic elections, it conformed to the ideal of the Kingdom of God in other respects, allowing for the fact that the Government of God then consisted of but one state and not a world federation. It was strictly orthodox in its adherence to American political thought. In fact, it was an ideal. Said Bernhisel in a letter from Washington, to President Young, October 2, 1850: "The Constitution of Deseret was much admired by statesmen here, not only as being very ably written, but was regarded as the best Constitution of the Country."<sup>66</sup>

The State of Deseret was not officially launched until July, 1849. Meantime the General Council continued to function, as it had before the above election. Along with its other duties, the council dealt with the problem of colonizing adjacent areas in the Great Basin. At their meeting on March 10th, they "Voted that a colony of 30 men settle in Utah Valley this spring for the purpose of farming and fishing, and of instructing the Indians in cultivating the earth and of teaching them civilization." It was suggested by the council that the following men be members of this colony: John S. Higbee, William Wadsworth, Dimick B. Huntington, Samuel Ewing, Peter W. Conover, Alexander Williams, Houghton Conover, and John Scott.<sup>67</sup> At their regular Saturday meeting the following week, the council again acted on this matter. To quote:

The names of a company of thirty-three, who were going to settle in Utah Valley, were read. The company, a few days previously, had chosen John S. Higbee for President

and Bishop, Isaac Higbee for first counselor and Dimick B. Huntington second counselor.<sup>68</sup>

There can be little doubt that the General Council, as the colonial legislature of Deseret, did its work well. When the State of Deseret met in official capacity, it had no immediate need to establish civil laws to govern the people. Said Morgan of the first meeting of the Assembly: "It is noteworthy that no effort was made toward providing civil laws and institutions at this session."<sup>69</sup> The first session of the new government was primarily concerned with a petition to the Federal Government of the United States for admission into the Union. Deseret had come into being, but the colonial council had done its work so well that the functions of law had already been established when the State commenced its official functions. Few states, if any, can boast of such an orderly and intelligent beginning.

When the law organizing the Territory of Utah was passed by Congress in September, 1850, opposing factors were introduced into the political picture of the Great Basin that eventually made it impossible for the political adjunct of the priesthood to function longer as the primary instrument of government in the area. Nevertheless, it did not cease to exist for some time thereafter—at least until 1870. During this period, the ideal of a future world government under the Kingdom of God burned in the hearts of many of the Saints. It was voiced by Brigham Young in 1863, when he declared: "Joseph Smith organized this government before, in Nauvoo, and he said if we did our duty, we could prevail over all our enemies."<sup>70</sup>

But neither the Saints nor those not of their faith were disposed to do their part in establishing the millennial government. So far as the Saints were concerned, it was with them as it had been when the Law of Consecration was introduced: they were unwilling to develop the understanding and the obedience necessary to play the role God would have them play in establishing a government capable of eventually coping with the job of establishing world peace. When they came to realize their responsibilities to the world and truly developed the principles of Zion in their lives, Brigham Young argued in 1872, God would see to it that they were given the power to achieve these ends. Said he of their failure to meet the necessary standards:

Will he [God] ever grant power to his Saints on the earth? Yes, they will take the kingdom, and possess it for ever and ever; but in the capacity they are now, in the condition that they now present themselves before God, before the world and before each other? Never, never! until we are sanctified, until we are filled with the wisdom of God, with the knowledge of God, will he bequeath the power that he has in reserve for his Saints; never will the Saints possess it until they are prepared to wield it with all that judgment, discretion, wisdom and forbearance that the Lord Almighty wields in his own capacity, and uses at his pleasure. . . . When we as a people possess the abundance of that patience, that longsuffering and forbearance that we need, to possess the privileges and the power that the Lord has in reserve for his people, we will receive to our utmost satisfaction. We shall not have it now. The Lord says, "I can not give it to you now." . . .

Do we understand anything with regard to the building up of the kingdom? I will say, scarcely. Have we seen it as a people? How long shall we travel, how long shall we live, how long shall God wait for us to sanctify ourselves and become one in the Lord, in our actions and in our ways for the building up of the kingdom of God, that he can bless us? . . .

When are the Latter-day Saints going to be prepared to receive the kingdom? Are we now? Not at all! We are prepared for some things, and we receive just as fast as we prepare ourselves. Well, what can we do, what more can we do? We can do just what we please to do. It is in our power to do just what we please to do with regard to sanctifying ourselves before the Lord, and preparing ourselves to build up his kingdom.<sup>71</sup>

These sentiments expressed by Brigham Young represent the thinking of Joseph Smith on the subject. According to the Prophet, God limits himself to the framework of man's free agency in dealing with the human family. He commands and revokes as men are willing to obey.<sup>72</sup> Thus, even though the ideal of the Government of God finally gave way before the practical development of events associated with gaining statehood in the Union, this concession need not be seen as a repudiation of Joseph Smith's prophetic picture of a future world government. To him it meant that if the world rejected God's plan of universal peace, an era of world-wide conflict and warfare would develop and continue to such proportions that the people of the world would one day be willing to turn to God's plan and co-operate in organizing the political powers of the Kingdom of God throughout the earth. In 1879, John Taylor, as President of the Church, spoke of that future day, stating:

We have got this kingdom to build up; and it is not a phantom, but a reality. We have to do it, God expects it at our hands. . . . We have got to go on and progress in these things. We have got to establish a government upon the principle of righteousness, justice, truth and equality and not according to the many false notions that exist among men. And then the day is not far distant when this nation will be shaken from centre to circumference. And now, you may write it down, any of you, and I will prophesy it in the name of God. And then will be fulfilled that prediction to be found in one of the revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Those who will not take up their sword to fight against their neighbor must needs flee to Zion for safety. And they will come, saying, we do not know anything of the principles of your religion, but we perceive that you are an honest community; you administer justice and righteousness, and we want to live with you and receive the protection of your laws, but as for your religion we will talk about that some other time. Will we protect such people? Yes, all honorable men. When the people shall have torn to shreds the Constitution of the United States the Elders of Israel will be found holding it up to the nations of the earth and proclaiming liberty and equal rights to all men, and extending the hand of fellowship to the oppressed of all nations. This is part of the programme, and as long as we do what is right and fear God, he will help us and stand by us under all circumstances.<sup>73</sup>

Time is the test of all prophecy; and Joseph Smith's concept of world government was a prophecy. Whether that ideal will materialize in actual fact the future will

determine. Meanwhile, we can note the historical role of his concept in Church history. Regardless of what the future may hold, Joseph Smith's ideal of world government under the Kingdom of God has had an illustrious past.

### Chapter Footnotes

1. Dale Morgan, "The State of Deseret," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, VIII (April, July, October, 1940), p. 79.
2. Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah* (Salt Lake City, 1892), I, 389. Bancroft likewise concludes: "Until the year 1849 the Mormons were entirely under the control of their ecclesiastical leaders, regarding the presidency not only as their spiritual head, but as the source of law in temporal things."—*History of Utah* (San Francisco, 1890), p. 439. More recently Creer described government during this period as "a pure theocracy" in which there was "a complete fusion of church and state—the utilization of one set of institutions for both ecclesiastical and civil affairs."—Leland H. Creer, "The Evolution of Government in Early Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, January, 1958, p. 27.
3. Howard Egan, *Pioneering the West* (Salt Lake City, 1917), p. 127.
4. *Journal History*, September 6, 1847.
5. *Ibid.*, September 9, 1847.
6. John Young later became a member, January 20, 1849. See *Journal History* under that date.
7. *Journal History*, October 3, 1847.
8. *Ibid.*, December 9, 1848.
9. Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, pp. 80-2.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 82-6.
11. Johnson to Gibbs, p. 23.
12. Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review* (Independence, Mo., 1947), p. 124. (Italics by the writer) Johnson's statement seems to imply that an election of some kind was held—that the General Council did not merely assume the right to organize itself into the Colonial Legislature of Deseret.
13. Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, p. 80.
14. Part of Lee's diary at this point was lost. It may have contained information vital to this subject.
15. Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, pp. 86-7. (Italics added by the writer)
16. Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, p. 86. (Italics other than the date added by the writer.) The *Journal History* report does not give this information, but its record of other items of business considered at the time is in fundamental accord with Lee's record.
17. *Ibid.* (Italics other than the date by the writer.) That this was a meeting of the Council of Fifty is evident from the fact that it adjourned to meet again February 9th. Of the latter meeting, Lee reported: "At 5 the Council of YTFIF met agreeable to adjournment." See *ibid.*, p. 88.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-1. (Italics other than the date by the writer.)
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 94-6. (Italics other than the date by the writer.)
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 97-8. (Italics other than the date by the writer.)
21. *Journal History*, March 9, 1849. (Italics by the writer.)
22. *Ibid.*, March 3, 1849; Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, pp. 97-8.

23. Johnson to Gibbs, p. 23.
24. *Journal History*, March 16, 1849.
25. Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, p. 107.
26. Morgan, *op. cit.*, 88.
27. Creer erroneously states that "the urgency of ecclesiastical business" led to this decision to relieve the high council of civil responsibilities. See *op. cit.*, p. 30. For evidence that the above meeting was held by the General Council, see Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, pp. 80-6, in light of the January 6th meeting he reports.
28. See *Journal History*, January 6, 7, 1849; Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, p. 86. At a meeting January 20th, "Amasa M. Lyman reported that several of the cattle committee went to Utah Valley and found from 2 1/2 to 4 inches of snow and concluded that G. S. L. Valley was the best place to keep the cattle." *Journal History*, January 20, 1849.
29. See Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, *op. cit.*
30. *Journal History*, January 6, 20, and February 3, 1849.
31. *Ibid.*, January 6, 1849.
32. *Ibid.*; Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, *op. cit.* The *Journal History* reports that only one building was to be destroyed, while Lee indicates that there was more than one.
33. *Journal History*, January 20, 1849. Each man present, with the exception of two, donated the sum of \$1.00, said John D. Lee. See Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, pp. 87-8. Lee reports this meeting as having been held on February 3rd. Otherwise his report is in general harmony with that given in the *Journal History*. Lee's date may be in error, as he seems to have recorded the proceedings of this and other meetings held by the council during this period some time afterward.
34. *Journal History*, February 3, 1819.
35. Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, *op. cit.*
36. *Journal History*, February 3, 1849. Lee reports this action as having been taken at the February 9th meeting. The name William M. Lemon he gives as Wm. McLemon. See Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, pp. 88-9.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 88; *Journal History*, February 9, 1849. Lee added that they also reported that there were also 1,100 milk cows to 4,000 souls.
38. February 9, 1849. The discretionary powers granted to the assessor Lee reports as the right "to pin down upon the rich and percurious [penurious?], and when he comes to a poor man or widow that is honest, instead of taxing them, give them a few 'dollars.'" See Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, *op. cit.*
39. *Journal History*, under above dates.
40. Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, pp. 90-2.
41. *Journal History*, February 17, 1849.
42. *Ibid.*, Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, *op. cit.*
43. *Idem.*
44. *Ibid.*; *Journal History*, February 17, 1849.
45. There is a conflict on the time the February 24th meeting got underway. The *Journal History* reports that the meeting was scheduled for 10:00 a.m., but since a quorum was not present the council adjourned until 6:00 p.m., when "several of the Twelve and others were present." Lee, however, reports that "a convention of the Legislation council" met at the appointed place at 9:00 a.m., and after offering

prayer "proceeded to business." Lee also reported that Brigham Young and others "took supper" and "spent the evening" with him at his home that day, which would seemingly preclude the possibility of the council meeting at 6:00 p.m. Despite this difference of time, both sources are agreed in their report of the major business transactions during the meeting.

46. The *Journal History* report is that the petition was "signed by himself and seven others," while Lee states that the petition had nine names attached.
47. On March 3, 1849, the council "Voted that the president of the stake dictate the fencing of the blocks in the city." *Ibid.*, March 3, 1849.
48. Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, pp. 94-6.
49. *Journal History*, February 24, 1849; Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, *op. cit.* The vote of the General Council that these men be cut off the Church was no doubt in the form of a recommendation.
50. *Ibid.*, 97-8. The concept here voiced, known more popularly as the doctrine of blood atonement, laid the foundation for the establishment of capital punishment in Utah for murder. Its basis is theological, asserting that there are certain crimes which the atonement of Christ will not cover, particularly if they be committed after a person has been cleansed from sin through baptism and received the enlightening powers of the Holy Ghost. Since, in the eternal economy of God, justice must be upheld; and since, in such serious cases, men cannot make a mockery of the atonement of Christ and then expect that His atonement will pay the debt of justice in such cases, the individual himself must pay the debt either here or hereafter. Hence, in some cases it was deemed proper to take the life of such persons through the shedding of their blood, that mercy might have claim upon them in the day of redemption.
51. *Ibid.*; *Journal History*, January 20 and March 1, 1849.
52. Lee reports that this item of business was considered at the meeting of March 4, 1849. See Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, pp. 98-100.
53. *Journal History*, March 3, 1849; Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, 97-8.
54. *Journal History*, March 4, 1849. It may be that the General Council was organized much like a regular stake high council. Lee reports that "after several counsellors had spoken on the subject, it was voted that an election be held on the 12th day of March. . . ."—Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, pp. 98-100. See D&C 102:1 for the organizational aspects of the high council.
55. *Journal History*, *op. cit.* (Italics by the writer.)
56. *Ibid.*, Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, pp. 98-100.
57. *Journal History*, *op. cit.*; Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, *op. cit.*
58. *Constitution of the State of Deseret*, p. 1. Cited in Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 84. Morgan notes that the "many citizens" are not specified by name or number in this source.
59. Andrew Love Neff, *History of Utah* (Salt Lake City, 1940), pp. 114-5.
60. *Journal History*, March 5, 1849.
61. Article 5.
62. It has been pointed out elsewhere in this study that an election of the Colonial Legislature, which became the General Assembly, may have been held as early as December 1848.
63. *Journal History*, March 10 and 12, 1849. There were some changes in this final ticket from the revised proposal the council made on March 4th. These further revisions

were no doubt the work of the election committee, between the March 4th meeting and the meeting of March 10th, when the final ticket was presented to the council.

64. D&C 58:22

65. "Preamble of the Constitution of the State of Deseret."

66. Cited in Neff, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-9.

67. *Journal History*, March 10, 1849. See also Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle*, pp. 100-101.

68. *Journal History*, March 17, 1849

69. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

70. *Journal History*, January 19, 1863.

71. *J.D.*, XV, 2-4.

72. D&C 56:4-5; D&C 58:32-33; D&C 124:49-53

73. *J.D.*, XXI, 8.