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The Kingdom of God in Mormon Thought and Practice, 1830-1896

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Kingdom of God in Mormon Thought
and Practice, 1830-1896

KLAUS J. HANSEN

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN MORMON THOUGHT
AND PRACTICE, 1830-1896

by

Klaus J. Hansen

A DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Submitted to the Graduate Division
of Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1963

MAJOR: HISTORY

APPROVED BY:

Edward Lewis 6/4/63
Adviser Date

ABSTRACT

In the spring of 1844 the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith organized a secret organization called the Council of Fifty as the governing body of a political kingdom of God which ultimately was to rule the world. The idea of the political kingdom of God and attempts of the Council of Fifty to transform this idea into reality through the creation of a temporal Mormon state provided the central theme of Mormon history during the major part of the nineteenth century. It is therefore one of the more puzzling phenomena of historiography that these aspects of Mormon history have escaped almost entirely the scrutiny of historians. It is the major purpose of this study to fill this gap.

The idea of the political Kingdom of God was paradoxical. On the one hand it was the expression of values that were closely akin to those of an age in which manifest destiny was a major article of faith. Mormons revered the Constitution of the United States and believed that America

and the United States were to play a special role in the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Ultimately, however, the government of the United States would be destroyed and replaced by the government of the Kingdom.

As a result of such ideas the political Kingdom of God was one of the primary causes for the conflict that marred relations between Mormons and Gentiles for over half a century. Gentile opposition to the political Kingdom of God was a primary cause in the death of Joseph Smith, in the exodus of the Saints to the Rocky Mountains, and the anti-polygamy crusade of the 1870's and 1880's. Mormon attempts to establish a political kingdom of God through the Council of Fifty confirm that the anti-polygamy crusade, which was primarily a Gentile pretext to destroy this political Kingdom, had a basis in fact.

As a result of this conflict, the Mormons were forced to relegate to an undetermined future date their attempts to build a temporal kingdom. Having eliminated the separatist currents within their religion, Mormons eagerly identified their religion with American nationalism by accepting the authority of the federal government and building the

Kingdom within the framework of a larger American culture. Consequently, persecution ceased, and Mormonism became not only acceptable but highly respectable.

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PREFACE

The history of Mormonism is paradoxical. During the nineteenth century, Mormonism was characterized both by a strong identification with American nationalism, and by a separatist nationalism of its own. Few Latter-day Saints today are aware of this paradox, believing that Mormon values regarding American society prevalent during the nineteenth century are identical with those of the present. Most Latter-day Saints will admit that the cessation of polygamy in 1890 signified a change in Mormon values, but they insist that this transformation was a minor one, not affecting the fundamental nature of Mormonism.

Several historians, supporting their assertions with significant evidence from Mormon history, have pointed out that the Saints were mistaken in this belief. It is the purpose of this study to show that Mormon aspirations during the nineteenth century to establish a political kingdom of God through the activities of a secret organization called

the Council of Fifty confirm more fully than ever before that this transformation was of major dimensions. This study, therefore, will be concerned primarily with an examination of the idea of the political Kingdom of God in Mormon history, and the attempts of the Council of Fifty to transform this idea into reality.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the aid of the many people and institutions who facilitated this study. I am particularly indebted to Professor Edward Lurie, who directed this dissertation, for his constant encouragement and invaluable criticisms both of content and style. Professor Goldwin Smith has been an unfailing counselor. Professor Raymond C. Miller had a patient ear and gave advice freely. Professor Lee Benson made many valuable suggestions. I am grateful to Professor Margaret Sterne for her continued interest in my studies. Professor Russel B. Swensen of Brigham Young University kindled my first interest in history, and Professor Richard D. Poll, also of Brigham Young University, provided stimulation for a desire to learn more about the Mormon past.

I wish to thank the staffs of the following institutions for their cooperation: Brigham Young University Library and University Archives; the University of Utah Library; the Church Historian's Office of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; the Utah State Historical Society; the New York Public Library; Houghton Library and Widener Library at Harvard University; University of Michigan Library; and Wayne State University Library.

I am particularly grateful to Mrs. Juanita Brooks for freely sharing with me her extensive knowledge of Mormon history and Mormon sources. Professors James R. Clark and Gustive O. Larson of Brigham Young University, and Dr. Everett L. Cooley of the Utah State Historical Society gave valuable information on special topics. Alfred L. Bush, Curator of the Rollins Collection of Western Americans at Princeton University first called my attention to the significance for Mormon history of the Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty. He has been an unfailing friend, supporting this project from its inception both with his enthusiasm and extensive knowledge of Mormon sources. Innumerable stimulating discussions with Dr. E. Carmon Hardy about Mormon history have prevented me from many pitfalls.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to my wife, Joan Duna Hansen, for carrying the major share of the burden of providing and caring for a growing family while this dissertation was in progress. I also appreciate her continued vigilance over my writing style.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1845, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sent a proclamation "to all the Kings of the World; To the Governors of the Several States, and to the Rulers and People of all Nations," informing them that the Kingdom of God, as predicted by Isaiah and Daniel, had come; it was to "fill the whole earth" and "stand forever." The "kings, rulers, and . . . Gentiles" were not only required "to repent and obey the gospel in its fulness, and thus become members or citizens of the kingdom of God," but were "commanded . . . to put [their] silver and . . . gold . . . ships . . . steam-vessels . . . railroad trains . . . horses, chariots, camels, mules, and litters" into the service of the Kingdom. The time would come when no "king, ruler, or subject--no community or individual [would] stand neutral": All would have to "take sides either for or gainst the kingdom of God." In language that may indeed have sounded presumptuous to Gentile ears, the proclamation closed with the injunction

that "the courts of Rome, London, Paris, Constantinople, Petersburg, and all others, will then have to yield the point and do homage, and pay tribute to one great centre, and to one mighty Sovereign, or, THRONES WILL BE CAST DOWN, AND KINGDOMS WILL CEASE TO BE."¹ Mormon missionaries were sent abroad to circulate the proclamation, and to gather in the faithful, so that the Kingdom might grow in numbers and in power. To the Mormon leaders there was nothing metaphorical about this proclamation. In their opinion, the kingdom predicted by Isaiah and Daniel was a literal, temporal kingdom.² Throughout the nineteenth century, Mormons attempted to build such a kingdom which, as the proclamation suggested, ultimately would rule the world.

Mormon political scientist G. Homer Durham was the first to point out that this proclamation was the expression of ideas discussed in a secret Council of Fifty, organized by Joseph Smith in 1844, and to suggest that "someone ought

¹"Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (Liverpool, 1845); History of the Church, VII, 558.

²Isa. 2:2-4; Dan. 2:44.

to make a study of this Council."³ This suggestion was made in 1944. In 1958, Hyrum L. Andrus published a study on Joseph Smith and World Government, in which the author examined some of the political ideas of Joseph Smith pertaining to the Kingdom of God, and first brought to attention important facts regarding the Council of Fifty.⁴ In 1958, also, appeared James R. Clark's Ed.D. dissertation "Church and State Relationships in Education in Utah" which brought out the great significance of the Council for an understanding of the Mormon-Gentile conflict in the field of education.⁵ A summary of Clark's findings were published in the Utah Historical Quarterly.⁶ Neither of these studies, however, purport to examine the idea of the Kingdom of God and the activities of the Council of Fifty within the spectrum of nineteenth-century Mormon history. Andrus'

³G. Homer Durham, "A Political Interpretation of Mormon History," Pacific Historical Review, XIII (1944), 141.

⁴(Salt Lake City, 1958).

⁵(Utah State University, 1958).

⁶"The Kingdom of God, the Council of Fifty and the State of Deseret," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXVI (1958), 130-148.

monograph, moreover, fails to come to grips with the central importance of the idea of the political Kingdom of God for Mormon thought and history by maintaining that the Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty are entirely in the mainstream of American democratic thought. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Andrus' attempt to identify the political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty with current Mormon theology and political theory is symptomatic of a whole school of Mormon writers who have been unable to see that Mormon thought and culture have undergone a radical transformation between 1890 and the early twentieth century. These writers, interpreting history from hindsight, have attempted to reconstruct the Mormon past according to a pattern of how it logically should have happened from the vantage point of the present. To most of these historians, the separatist nationalism of a political kingdom of God and a Council of Fifty simply do not fit into the present values of Mormonism, according to which the destiny of the Saints and that of American Democracy are identical. Hence these writers have either ignored the political Kingdom of God, or distorted

its character.⁷ Mormons no longer look forward to a time when the government of the United States would be destroyed to make room for a Mormon kingdom of God. Yet during the nineteenth century such a kingdom was one of the primary motivating factors in Mormonism. In the following pages, an attempt has been made to set forth the reasons for this motivation, and its impact on Mormon history.

⁷See below, pp. 199-203, 321-323.

CHAPTER I

THE MORMON KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE MILLENNIAL TRADITION

In 1841, Mormon Apostle Parley P. Pratt wrote a letter to Queen Victoria that may have startled her considerably if she read it, and that may well have caused her to fear for her throne had she taken it literally. "Know assuredly," Pratt warned the sovereign, "that the world in which we live is on the eve of a REVOLUTION, more wonderful in its beginning--more rapid in its progress--more lasting in its influence--more important in its consequences--than any which man has yet witnessed upon the earth." The present political and religious establishments of the earth, the letter solemnly affirmed, were destined to vanish, and God was about to set up "a new and universal Kingdom, under the immediate administration of the Messiah and his Saints."¹

¹Parley P. Pratt, To Her Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria (Manchester, England, 1841), p. 5.

The young Queen, no doubt, would have been even more startled had she had access to another letter, written three years later, by Pratt's fellow apostles Brigham Young and Willard Richards, to Reuben Hedlock, leader of the British Mormons, informing him that by this time, the Kingdom predicted by Pratt had actually been established: "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."² Although Hedlock himself does not reveal that the letter shocked him, modern-day orthodox Mormons might well think that it should have. Faithful Latter-day Saints generally believe that Joseph Smith had organized or rather restored the Church of Christ in 1830. By so doing, he had also organized the Kingdom of God on earth, a kingdom that was to be identical with the Church. If, however, Young and Richards were referring to the millennial kingdom to be ushered in with the return of Christ to earth, history may be read in vain for such an event in 1844, or since then.

²The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star, XXIII (1862), 422.

Indeed, in 1844 few Mormons knew what kind of kingdom their prophet had organized in that year, and fewer Mormons know today. To understand what kingdom Young and Richards were alluding to in their letter to Hedlock requires a brief examination of the development of the idea of the Kingdom of God in Mormon history.

In April, 1829, Joseph Smith averred, the Lord had announced that "a great and marvelous work is about to come forth unto the children of men. . . . Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whose desireth to reap, let him thrust his sickle in with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God."³ The salvation of the soul, traditionally, has been the province of the church; the faithful, generally, have regarded this process as the Kingdom of God made visible on earth in order to provide an avenue to the invisible Kingdom of God in heaven. In the days of Joseph Smith this concept was so much part of the Christian

³Joseph Smith, The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City, 1951 ed.), 6:1-4.

tradition that the terms "Church" and "Kingdom of God" were used rather loosely and interchangeably. Although Joseph Smith repudiated this tradition, he continued to use the term "Kingdom of God" with some lack of precision.

When Smith organized the Church of Christ on April 6, 1830, in Peter Whitmer's farmhouse in Fayette, New York, he asked those attending the organizational meeting of the church "whether they accepted us [Smith and Oliver Cowdery] as their teachers in the things of the kingdom of God, and whether they were satisfied that we should proceed and be organized as a Church."⁴ The new church was thus an ecclesiastical organization consisting of those who had accepted the tenets of the "restored Gospel" and had submitted to the rites and ceremonies necessary to gain membership. To this day, Mormons regard baptism, and the "laying on of hands" for the gift of the Holy Ghost as essential prerequisites for membership in the Church or Kingdom of God.⁵

⁴Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (2d ed.; Salt Lake City, 1950), I, 77. In 1838, the name was officially changed to Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

⁵Journal of Discourses, XII (1870), 56-57.

In this ecclesiastical sense, Mormons, like most Christians, hardly took the term "kingdom" literally, but considered it little more than an elevating metaphor.

The Saints, however, regarded metaphors with some suspicion. The most startling fact about Joseph Smith's first vision, which he experienced as a boy of fourteen, was not that he had seen God and Christ, but that these were separate beings and possessed (as he later learned) bodies of flesh and bone. Although the Christian ministers in Smith's neighborhood regarded his story as little more than a crude expression of anthropomorphism, to Smith it became the cornerstone of Mormon metaphysics. For the development of one of the major philosophical ideas of Mormonism resulted in its rejection of the mind-matter dualism of Cartesian philosophy. "There is no such thing as immaterial matter," proclaimed Smith. "All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; we cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that all is matter."⁶

⁶For a discussion of the dualistic metaphysics of Descartes see James Collins, A History of European Philosophy (Milwaukee, 1954), pp. 175-195. Doctrine and Covenants, 131:7-8. The metaphysical implications of

In an even more extreme expression of this same idea, the Mormon Millennial Star quoted the Prophet as saying that "God the father is material, Jesus Christ is material. Angels are material. Space is full of materiality. Nothing exists which is not material."⁷ The Christians, by worshipping an immaterial God, were thus, in fact, guilty of atheism.⁸

The Mormon concept of materialism, however, was more than a metaphysical construct. More concretely, it found expression in a strong emphasis on temporal matters in Mormon society. Although the mixing of the sublime and

Smith's monistic philosophy were analyzed by Orson Pratt in Absurdities of Immaterialism (Liverpool, 1849). But his proposal of an atomistic materialism as the basis for a Mormon metaphysics, more comprehensively expressed in The Great First Cause (Liverpool, 1851), was rejected by Brigham Young as unorthodox. More recently, Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe, in an analysis of this aspect of Mormon philosophy, paraphrased Smith succinctly: "Spiritual matter is but a refined form of gross matter." See A Rational Theology (Salt Lake City, 1915), p. 11. A recent and very concise discussion of the monistic aspect of Mormon qualitative metaphysics is Sterling McMurrin's The Philosophical Foundations of Mormon Theology (Salt Lake City, 1959).

⁷Millennial Star, VI (1845), 19.

⁸Parley P. Pratt implied this in Key to the Science of Theology (Liverpool, 1855), pp. 27-28, 122.

the mundane was a peculiarity of nineteenth-century American religion not reserved for Mormonism alone, the followers of Joseph Smith went further than most sects in this direction. Thus, when the editor of a Pittsburgh Universalist publication visited Kirtland, Ohio in 1837, he could not refrain from observing that the Saints had "too much worldly wisdom connected with their religion-- too great a desire for the perishable riches of this world --holding out the idea that the kingdom of Christ is to be composed of 'real estate, herds, flocks, silver, gold, etc. as well as of human beings.'⁹ This concern for both the spiritual and the temporal welfare of man has become one of the chief characteristics of Mormonism.

The dual emphasis of the spiritual and the temporal is also strongly reflected in the priesthood organization of the Mormon Church. On May 15, 1829, Smith and Cowdery announced to their followers and to the world, that none other than John the Baptist had returned from heaven to

⁹S. A. Davis, in Messenger and Advocate, III (1837), 489-91, as quoted in Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 6.

ordain them priests in the order of Aaron. Several months later, in the summer of that same year, Smith and Cowdery claimed to have been ordained apostles under the hands of three other heavenly visitors who had announced themselves as Peter, James, and John. The apostleship held the keys to the Melchizedek or higher priesthood. Thus, priestly duties were shared by two distinct groups, with the Melchizedek priesthood officiating primarily in spiritual matters, and the Aaronic priesthood administering to the temporal needs of the Church.¹⁰ Smith inferred that this priesthood organization, as combined in its spiritual and temporal branches, was called the Kingdom of God.¹¹ Brigham Young was even more explicit on the matter:

I will say to you with regard to the kingdom of God on the earth--Here is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, organized with its rules and regulations and degrees, with the quorums of the holy Priesthood, from the First Presidency to the teachers and deacons; here we are, an organization. God called upon Joseph, he called upon Oliver Cowdery, then others were called through Joseph, the Church was organized, he with his two counselors

¹⁰ Doctrine and Covenants, 27:12; Section 107.

¹¹ History of the Church, V, 256-59.

comprised the First Presidency. In a few years the Quorum of the Twelve was organized, the High Priests' quorums were organized, and the Priests' quorum, the Teachers' quorum and the Deacons'. This is what we are in the habit of calling the kingdom of God.¹²

This interpretation of the Kingdom of God as a synonym for the Church in both its spiritual and temporal connotations seems always to have been the one most generally accepted by the followers of Joseph Smith. It has found expression from the pulpit to this day and is, in fact, about the only interpretation most Mormons are aware of at the present time.¹³

Yet Mormons would acknowledge that the Kingdom of God need not necessarily encompass a formal and complete church organization. That such thinking is entirely orthodox the Prophet Joseph Smith suggested in a sermon

¹²Journal of Discourses, XVII (1875), 156. See also Times and Seasons, IV (1842), 24-25; John Taylor, Journal of Discourses, X (1865), 54-58; Wilford Woodruff, ibid., XXI (1881), 281-86.

¹³Bruce R. McConkie, "Keys of the Kingdom," address at Brigham Young University, April 23, 1957 (mimeographed). The author sees the Kingdom of God as synonymous with the Church in spiritual as well as temporal matters.

given at Nauvoo in 1843. In an attempt to refute Alexander Campbell, who held that the Kingdom of God was not set up until the day of Pentecost, Smith argued that John the Baptist had been a legal administrator of the Kingdom of God by virtue of his priesthood. The Prophet expanded this idea into the doctrine that "whenever men can find out the will of God and find an administrator legally authorized from God, there is the kingdom of God." In this sense, argued Smith, the kingdom had existed on earth "from the days of Adam to the present time."¹⁴

Although the concepts of the Kingdom of God cited thus far may not be compatible with orthodox Christianity in all details they depart on the whole very little from standards acceptable to Christianity at large. The fact that these ideas have crystallized into the authoritative, orthodox position of the Mormon Church at the present time suggests that Mormonism has advanced far along the road towards orthodox Christianity, to what Ernst Troeltsch defined as a "church," in distinction from a "sect." "The

¹⁴ History of the Church, V, 256-59.

Kingdom of God and reason, the Kingdom of God realized on earth, the invincible faith in the victory of goodness and in the possibility of overcoming every human institution which is based upon the mere struggle for existence, the Christian Revolution: This is the primitive, splendid ideal of sect."¹⁵ The virtual disappearance of this sectarian concept of the Kingdom of God from Mormon theory and practice in the twentieth century suggests the extent to which Mormons have transformed their idea of the Kingdom.

One of the most striking examples of this progression of Mormonism from radical Protestantism to the orthodox respectability of a "church" is revealed in the changes to which the Saints were forced to subject their concept of Zion. The idea of a city of Zion to be built on this earth had been a favorite dream of the radical Reformation. The idea of building a Zion in the wilderness had become a peculiarly American expression of this dream. The Mormons were not the first to leave homes, friends, civilization,

¹⁵ Ernst Troeltsch, The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches, trans. Olive Wyon (London, 1931), II, 461-65, 727.

behind them, in exchange for a wilderness where in the words of William Bradford--an earlier migrant--there were "no friends to welcome them, nor inns to entertaine or refresh their weather beaten bodys, no houses much less townes to repaire too, to seke for succoure."¹⁶ But the Mormon search for a city of Zion represents the strongest expression of this idea in nineteenth century America.

In its original intention the Mormon Zion was envisioned as a literal, physical gathering place for the elect. Through his agent Joseph Smith, the Lord's finger had pointed to Jackson County, Missouri, as the locale for the building of the city of the Saints. Soon, however, the twin forces of persecution and increasing church membership forced the Prophet to expand the idea of Zion. He described the Church as being analogous to a gigantic tent supported by stakes. Zion, in Jackson County, was to be the center stake. Radiating from this core, "stakes of Zion" could be erected as needed to support the ever

¹⁶William Bradford, History of Plimouth Plantation (Boston, 1898), pp. 94-95, in David B. Davis, "The New England Origins of Mormonism," The New England Quarterly, XXVI (1953), 168.

growing tent of the Kingdom, until it would cover the entire North and South American continents.¹⁷

The concept of Zion as a physical and geographical reality was thus transformed into a spiritual ideal. Mormon theology, moreover, was readily adaptable to this change. In Mormon metaphysics there was nothing spiritual that had not also material substance. It was also true that things material had spiritual qualities. Zion was therefore not only bricks, mortar, and real-estate; inevitably, it also had its seat in the hearts of the faithful. That this concept may have gradually increased in importance through necessity is not an unreasonable assumption; for when bricks and mortar crumbled under Gentile hands, there seemed but one place left where the "pure in heart" could keep their Zion inviolate.¹⁸ Nevertheless, as long as the Saints were actively engaged in building their physical Zion, the idea of the pure in heart might ennoble the idea of an earthly Kingdom of God, but it could not

¹⁷ Smith, History of the Church, VI, 318-322.

¹⁸ Ibid., I, 402; Doctrine and Covenants, 97:21.

supplant it. For as long as the pure in heart gathered to Zion, the physical concept was at least as important as the ideal of a spiritual Zion. Only when the Saints no longer felt a need to gather did the concept of Zion as the pure in heart become another illustration of the transformation of Mormonism from a sect into a church. Even at the present time faithful Mormons tend to refer in a special sense to Salt Lake City, as their Zion. There lingers then, the kernel of a physical concept which has not been entirely lost.

It is true, however, that the notion of Zion as a physical entity has been diluted enough to make the letter written by Brigham Young and Willard Richards to Hedlock in 1844 unintelligible to most present day Mormons. Many Latter-day Saints even in the days of Joseph Smith may well have been puzzled by its contents. Was not Nauvoo a physical manifestation of Zion, of a social and material kingdom of God? Did not the Saints, inevitably, hold political power in their own communities? What other sort of kingdom, then, had to be organized? That it could not have been the millennial kingdom seemed obvious to all the faithful. The Kingdom of God organized in 1844 grew

directly out of the concept of an earthly Zion and represented one of the strongest expressions of millennialism in Mormon history.

True to the apocalyptic seekers for the millennium like the Montanists, John of Leyden in Munster, and the Fifth Monarchists in Cromwell's England, the Mormon Saints repudiated Saint Augustine's doctrine that the Kingdom of God and the millennium had, in fact, been ushered in with Christ's ascension. Even in its least radical phase, Mormon theology held that the millennial kingdom was destined to come in the future. In its more revolutionary earlier period, Pratt's letter to Queen Victoria represents a typical example of a more enthusiastic millennialism that pointed to a day when, as an editorial in the Millennial Star put it, "all the political, and all the religious organizations that may previously exist, will be swallowed up into one entire union--one universal empire--having no laws but God's law, and Saints to administer them."¹⁹

¹⁹Millennial Star, I (1840), 5.

The Mormon Church, in both its spiritual and temporal manifestations, thus existed to prepare its followers for the advent of the messianic kingdom. Ultimately, the earthly and spiritual kingdoms would be one; but in the meantime, a dichotomy between reality and aspiration was inevitable. Yet in their letter to Hedlock Young and Richards were referring to neither of these manifestations of the Kingdom of God. Rather, the Lord had revealed to Joseph Smith that still another manifestation of the "Kingdom" was required to usher in the millennial reign of Christ. This was the political Kingdom of God, destined to bring about the political transformation of the world, just as the Church was intended to change the world religiously. Christ, at his coming, would usher in not only the ecclesiastical reign of a world church, but of a political world government. And in order to prepare the Son of God for his reign, the Saints would have to establish a political government on earth. As apostle George A. Cannon admonished an audience of Mormon missionaries, the time would come when the Elders of the Church would go out to the world not only as representatives of an ecclesiastical organization, but as literal ambassadors of the

Mormon Kingdom of God, accredited to foreign governments. For the Kingdom of God was "to become a political power, known and recognized by the powers of the earth," before the nations of the earth would have met with the ultimate destruction decreed by the Almighty, preparatory to the arrival of Christ the King himself.²⁰

The political Kingdom of God with its governing body the Council of Fifty can only be understood, then, in the context of Mormon millennialism. Since the evolution and metamorphosis of the millenarian ideal in Mormon history was inextricably intertwined with the rise and fall of the political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty, it is important to delineate the development of Mormon millenarian thought.

Walter Nigg and Norman Cohn have demonstrated that the pursuit of the millennium antedated Christianity and had its origins in Hebrew nationalism. The writings of Isaiah and the Book of Daniel stirred the nationalistic imagination of the Jews from Judas Maccabaeus to Simon

²⁰ Ibid., XXIV (1862), 103.

bar-Cochba. They hoped to establish a messianic kingdom through the hands of a "saving remnant of Israel" which would survive the judgment of the Lord, and live with Him in the New Jerusalem, that spiritual and political capital of a new world of peace and abundance. The Christians added to this messianic vision certain passages from the New Testament, and especially from the Book of Revelation; they also continued to draw upon Old Testament prophecies whenever the adversities of life could be countered by the belief that the time was near at hand when all wrongs would be righted and all enemies made prostrate under the triumphant feet of the Saviour and his victorious Saints.²¹

Although the philosophy of Saint Augustine effectively suppressed millennialism in the Roman Catholic Church (which from then on merely carried along the idea as so much excess baggage) the apocalyptic tradition "persisted in the obscure underworld of popular religion."²² It was

²¹Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium (2nd ed.; New York, 1961), pp. 1-21; Walter Nigg, Das Ewige Reich (Erlenbach-Zuerich, 1944), pp. 9-31.

²²Cohn, p. 14.

here that the seeds of millennialism could be effectively nurtured until they bore fruit in the Protestant Reformation, much to the distress of John Calvin and Martin Luther, both of whom condemned Anabaptist excesses in the harshest terms. In the orthodox Christian view, the examples of the Anabaptists Jan Matthys and Johann Bockhold could hardly be held up as models for the future. The same was true of the excesses of certain left-wing Protestants in the English Revolution, who, far from being deterred by the fate of their Munster predecessors, attempted to establish the Fifth Monarchy in Oliver Cromwell's England.²³

Although the New England Puritans recoiled from such "gangrena," the millenarian tradition continued in America in less extreme forms. This was the case even among certain groups of American Puritans. As Ira V. Brown has pointed out, the "millenarian faith in one form or another

²³Ibid., 286-306; an excellent discussion of the political and religious thought of the English Fifth Monarchists is Alfred Cohen, "The Kingdom of God in Puritan Thought: A Study of the Quest for the Fifth Monarchy" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1961).

was entirely respectable socially and intellectually well into the nineteenth century."²⁴ The early part of that century was in fact a fruitful period for the promulgation of variegated millennial doctrines. For the Shakers, formally known as the Millennial Church of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, the millennium had already begun with the incarnation of "Mother Ann" Lee as a female Christ. John Humphrey Noyes, leader of the Oneida Perfectionists, could seriously nominate Jesus Christ for the presidency of the United States. The followers of George Rapp at New Harmony believed that the Kingdom of God was already at hand. Indeed, chiliasm in one form or other became a major article of faith in most communitarian sects. Even Robert Owen, though ~~reputating~~ Historical Review the transcendent character of the Kingdom of God, believed in the possibility of establishing a secular millennium.²⁵

²⁴ Ira V. Brown, "Watchers for the Second Coming: The Millennial Tradition in America," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 39 (1952), 451. Mississippi Valley

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 452-53; Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Backwoods Utopias: The Sectarian and Owenite Phases of Communitarian Socialism in America, 1663-1829 (Philadelphia, 1950), p. 91.

When Joseph Smith moved with his family from Vermont to that part of western New York known to historians as the "Burned-over District," such expectations were very much in the air. Although Smith did not identify the millennialism of his church with that of any other sect, it is not surprising that the belief in the immediacy of the parousia became one of the chief motivating forces of the new religion. In spite of the fact that Smith's millenarian ideas differed significantly from most of his contemporaries, he shared with such millennialists as Alexander Campbell and William Miller (who originally predicted the coming of the Lord for the year 1843) the belief that Christ's coming would precede the millennium.

This doctrine of pre-millennialism was interdependent with the logic and the assumptions of the cataclysmic history of evil in the world. According to this eschatology, the millennium could not be ushered in until the wicked would be burned and assigned to a temporary hell, a feat only Christ himself could accomplish. Thereafter, Satan would be bound so that the righteous could enjoy a thousand years of peace and happiness under the reign of Christ. At the end of this period, Satan would burst his

chains temporarily and turn men once again to wickedness. Shortly thereafter, the Lord would consume the entire earth in a general holocaust from which only the righteous would escape by being "caught up" into heaven. After the conflagration, God would summon all men before His bar of judgment, and assign to them their just rewards. To the righteous he would deed a renewed earth as a permanent inheritance. This was the "celestial glory" or Kingdom of Heaven, to which all Latter-day Saints aspired. The millennial kingdom, then, was itself but the preparation for the ultimate establishment of a kingdom that transcended all others in glory.²⁶

The Kingdom of Heaven surpassed the millennial kingdom in grandeur, but it was too remote to inspire the immediate hopes of the Saints. These aspirations were reserved for that kingdom which the Mormons, in the typical fashion of all chiliasts, believed to be immediately at hand. This conviction was dominant in the early days of the Church. Since the congregation usually could afford to be more

²⁶Doctrine and Covenants, 65; Section 78.

irresponsible than its leader, enthusiasm tended to increase as it worked its way down into the ranks. Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses for the Book of Mormon, catering to the rank and file, predicted in 1831 that the faithful would see Christ in fifteen years while non-believers would be damned.²⁷

The urgency and literal-mindedness of the millennial hope, as it found expression among many ordinary Mormons, is illustrated by the account of a Saint's dream recorded in the Millennial Star. The dreaming Saint had been transported to the year 1945. The millennium had long since arrived, as attested to by some archaeological relics, dug up at the former site of the city of New York, during the excavations for the temple in the 124th city of Joseph.²⁸ A guide, conducting the Saint on a tour of the city of Zion, pointed out dwellings that had "the appearance of 'precious stones'," and streets that "glittered like gold." At noon, more than three hundred thousand Saints assembled

²⁷ Painesville Telegraph, March 15, 1831.

²⁸ In 1832, Smith had predicted the "desolation and utter abolishment" of New York, Albany, and Boston unless they accepted Mormonism. See Doctrine and Covenants, 84: 114-115.

for lunch in the "grove of Zion," with Jesus Christ sitting at the head of the table:

After the feast . . . we stepped into the News Room, and the first article in the Pure News, which attracted our attention, was, the Minutes of the General Conference, held in Zion, on the 14th day of the first month, A.D., 1945, when it was motioned by Joseph Smith, and seconded by John the Revelator, "That forty-eight new cities be laid out and builded, this year, in accordance with the prophets which have said, 'who can number Israel? who can count the dust of Jacob? Let him fill the earth with cities.'" Carried unanimously. . . . The paper contained a notice for the half yearly conference, as follows: "The general half yearly conference will be held at Jerusalem on the 14th day of the seventh month, alternately with the yearly conference in Zion. It is proposed that the high way cast up between the two cities of our God, be decorated with fruit and shade trees between the two cities of our God, be decorated with fruit and shade trees between the cities and villages, which are only eighty furlongs apart, for the accommodation of wayfaring men of Israel. Gabriel has brought from paradise some seeds of fruit and grain which were originally in the Garden of Eden, and will greatly add to the comfort and convenience of man. . . ."

Many things which we saw are not lawful to utter and can only be known as we learned them, by the assistance of the guardian angel.²⁹

²⁹Millennial Star, VI (1845), 140-142. Actually, this account most likely was not an authentic dream. The editors probably provided the Saints with this vicarious excursion to the New Jerusalem in order to help them endure the hardships of the impending exodus to the Great Basin by directing their hopes towards a better future.

Although such accounts hardly qualified as church doctrine, the early Saints took them quite seriously.

Joseph Smith refrained from such fanciful speculations. He should not have been too surprised, however, that his followers showed less restraint. For many of his revelations indicated the nearness of the day of the Lord.³⁰ A close reading of these predictions indicates, however, that the Saints may not have observed the pronouncements of their own prophet very acutely. Smith usually avoided pinpointing a time for the millennium. As early as 1831 he had dampened the millennial enthusiasm of Martin Harris and others by revealing that if the signs of the times were "nigh at hand," it was "speaking after the manner of the Lord."³¹ Since a day, in the Lord's reckoning, was like a thousand years on earth, this scripture gave the Saints little comfort. As a result, they tended to ignore it, and

³⁰ See especially Doctrine and Covenants, 34:7 35:27; 38:8; 39:21; 43:17-35; 45:63; 49:7; 52-43; 58:4; 63:37, 53, 58; 112:24, 34.

³¹ Ibid., 63:53.

clutched to some of the less equivocal, though unofficial opinions of the Prophet, which were not included in the Mormon canon. One of these obiter dicta was the declaration that "there are those of the rising generation who shall not taste death till Christ comes."³² Another was a prediction, made to a group of Mormon Elders in 1835, that fifty-six years should wind up the scene."³³ With this statement, the Prophet had moved perilously close to appointing a time. But later on he reneged, suggesting that even prophets may be fallible.³⁴ At any rate, he felt perfectly safe in refuting William Miller's revised prediction that the Second Coming would occur on October 22, 1844: "I prophesy, in the name of the Lord, that Christ will not come in forty years; and if God ever spoke by my mouth, He will not come in that length of time."³⁵

The Prophet had received this negative assurance in 1842. While "praying very earnestly to know the time of

³²History of the Church, V, 336-37.

³³Millennial Star, LII (1890), 675; History of the Church, II, 182.

³⁴Doctrine and Covenants, 39:21; 49:7; 133:11.

³⁵History of the Church, VI, 254.

the coming of the Son of Man," he heard a voice repeat the following: "Joseph, my son, if thou livest until thou art eighty-five years old, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man; therefore let this suffice, and trouble me no more on this matter." Smith felt that about the only conclusion he could draw from a statement as equivocal as this was that "the coming of the Son of Man will not be any sooner than that time."³⁶ Since the Prophet was born in 1805, he believed that the parousia would not occur before 1890. Thus, when Cyrus Redding reported seeing "the sign of the Son of Man" in 1843, the founder of Mormonism declared that

. . . notwithstanding Mr. Redding may have seen a wonderful appearance in the clouds one morning about sunrise (which is nothing very uncommon in the winter season), he has not seen the sign of the Son of Man, as foretold by Jesus. . . . Therefore hear this, O earth: The Lord will not come to reign over the righteous, in this world, in 1843, nor until everything for the Bridegroom is ready.³⁷

Such caution prevented the Saints from rushing headlong into the disastrous enthusiasm of such groups like the

³⁶Ibid., V, 336; Doctrines and Covenants, 130:14-17.

³⁷History of the Church, V, 291, in Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Joseph Smith and the Millenarian Timetable," Brigham Young University Studies, III (1961), 61.

Millerites. It also caused considerable preoccupation among them with attempts to determine just when everything would be ready for the Bridegroom. Yet they had not been cast upon a sea of entire uncertainty. The signs of the times, like beacons, would guide them through the darkness until the light of Christ would reappear. To the Gentiles the beacons were warning lights if not the fires of judgment. For the signs included calamities of nature, railroad accidents, fires, steamboat explosions, wars, revolutions, and signs in the heavens. Because there was never any difficulty in finding such catastrophes in abundance, the Millennial Star faithfully recorded them in each issue under a special section headed "Signs of the Times." So did Smith in his personal history. Every calamity in the world was looked upon as a signpost of and contribution to the end of the world. "one and all," observed T. B. H. Stenhouse, "are, to the Saint, so many cheering confirmations of his faith, and intimations of the triumphant recognitions of . . . [the] 'Kingdom',"³⁸

³⁸T. B. H. Stenhouse, The Rocky Mountain Saints (New York, 1873), p. 489.

War was to play a special role in the ushering in of the millennium. For Christ would not be a ruler over the wicked; likewise, all nations and their governments would have to be destroyed because it was unlikely that they would acknowledge an abridgment of their sovereignty and give homage to "him whose right it is to reign."³⁹ This destruction of both men and nations was conditional; but even the most sanguine optimist among the saints did not expect a large-scale conversion of the world to Mormonism, a feat which alone could have saved mankind. As it was, the sword of Laban, which Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery purportedly had seen unsheathed in the Hill Cumorah as a symbol for the impending destruction, was "never to be sheathed again until the kingdoms of this world [had] become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ."⁴⁰

Divine judgments alone, however, could not bring about this final consummation. The cleansing fires of the Lord could rid the world of corruption, but the planting for a

³⁹ See especially Doctrine and Covenants, 87; see also 38:29; 45:63; 63:33.

⁴⁰ Journal of Discourses, XDX (1878), 38.

millennial harvest required new seed. The Lord would not return unless a chosen people had prepared itself to receive Him. If the Lord's word was to go forth from Jerusalem, and the law from Zion, the foundations for the spiritual and the political world capitals would have to be laid. Not until the Jews had returned to their ancient homeland, and not until a modern Israel in North America had created a viable nation from which the law could "go forth," would the eyes of the faithful behold the coming of the glory of the Lord.⁴¹ These were positive signs and thus, in the long run fraught with even more portent than the judgments of God. Most important, these were signs that the Saints had to bring about themselves. Joseph Smith taught his followers that although the Second Coming was an act of divine intervention, Christ would not return until the Saints had established moral, social, and political conditions congenial with the presence of a divine ruler on earth. Jedediah Grant tersely summed up the attitude of most Mormons: "If you want a heaven, go and make

⁴¹Doctrine and Covenants, 133:9-13, 21.

it."⁴² Mormon millennialism, therefore, differed significantly from most antecedent and contemporary forms, even from its own earliest chiliastic enthusiasm. It might even be the case that the Mormons, by assigning to man the primary responsibility for creating the millennium interjected into this optimistic doctrine an insurance clause against a remote possibility that the Lord, perhaps, might fail to reappear. The concept of the political Kingdom of God, regardless of its utopian character, suggests that Mormonism, by the early 1840's, had already undergone a shift toward what might be termed religious realism. From a psychological perspective, it was more prudent to doubt that the millennium, irrespective of human agency, would be ushered in miraculously.⁴³ It was no accident that Smith

⁴² Journal of Discourses, III (1854), 67.

⁴³ The belief that the parousia was to come by miraculous means was by far the more common one throughout the history of millennial expectations. See Nigg, p. 38. See also Sigmund Mowinckel, He That Cometh, trans. G. W. Anderson (New York, 1954), p. 126: "Eschatology also includes the thought that this drama has a universal, cosmic character. The universe itself, heaven and earth, is thrown into the melting pot. It follows that this is not brought about by human or historical forces, or by any immanent evolutionary process."

failed to set a time for Christ's return. Calendar watchers, inevitably, repaired to caves or mountains, only to be sorely disappointed when the miracle failed to occur. "The Mormons appointed a place" instead.⁴⁴

By this attitude the Saints were spared the intensity of the disappointments that led to the disintegration of those movements awaiting the Bridegroom in ascension robes. Mormonism, even in its radical phase of millennial enthusiasm, contained enough elements of stability to enable it, in the words of Richard Niebuhr, "to survive and to form a really distinctive and important religious denomination."⁴⁵ Yet it was also true that some form of disillusion was inherent in the very nature of millennialism.⁴⁶ The Saints, therefore, did not escape an inevitable psychological let-down. Many of Smith's followers, especially in the early

⁴⁴William Mulder, Homeward to Zion (Minneapolis, 1957), p. 21.

⁴⁵H. Richard Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Dominationism (Hamden, Conn., 1954), p. 160.

⁴⁶The idea of disillusion is one of the major themes of Nigg's work, as exemplified by its subtitle, "Geschichte einer Sehnsucht und einer Enttäuschung."

years, fervently hoped for a miraculous, catastrophic transformation of the world. A man as close to Smith as Patriarch Benjamin F. Johnson, an original member of the Council of Fifty, revealed his disappointment by recalling in 1903: "We were over seventy years ago taught by our leaders to believe that the coming of Christ and the millennial reign was much nearer than we believe it to be now."⁴⁷

By the early twentieth century, however, church leaders had worked out an effective rationalization to explain Christ's failure to appear. They asserted that saints had simply lacked a proper perspective of the historical process through which the Kingdom was to be realized. This allegation could either have meant that the early saints had not worked hard enough to push history along, or that in spite of strenuous efforts much more work had to be accomplished before the Savior would appear. Obviously, most saints favored the second interpretation. As early as 1850, Orson Pratt had suggested that the stupendous tasks of raising a nation, building cities, erecting temples, and

⁴⁷ Benjamin F. Johnson to George S. Gibbs (April - October), 1903 (typed MS, Brigham Young University Library).

"great feats" required the Saints to perform two days' work in one. "You can do it," he had admonished the faithful, perhaps failing to realize that he was asking for nothing less than miracles.⁴⁸

Pratt was at least consistent. Miracles, in Mormon theology, were nothing more than natural laws not yet discovered by man. Even the laws of God could not contradict those of Newtonian physics because God could not contradict himself. The Mormon God was subject to natural law; more than this, He was subject to a process of cosmic evolution from which no part of the universe was exempt. Every Saint, therefore, might aspire to godhood: "As man is God once was: as God is man may become," became a favored maxim of Mormons.⁴⁹ To a later generation of Latter-day Saints, Joseph Smith had clearly anticipated Charles Darwin.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Millennial Star, XII (1850), 358.

⁴⁹This famous sentence, which all Mormons are able to quote, was coined by Eliza R. Snow, plural wife of Joseph Smith.

⁵⁰See especially Nels L. Nelson, Scientific Aspects of Mormonism (New York, 1904). Nelson, an English professor at Brigham Young University, was strongly influenced by Herbert Spencer, John Fiske, and other Social Darwinists.

Such an exegesis was a gross misinterpretation of both Mormonism and Darwinism. Still, Mormonism was very much in the mainstream of western thought, as illustrated by its melioristic doctrine of eternal progression. The secular progressives had exchanged the idea of salvation for the idea of progress. Mormonism did not go this far. It was both secular and salvationist. But salvation was part of an evolutionary process that involved not only prayer but hard work and study. Joseph Smith insisted that man could be saved no faster than he gained knowledge. It is understandable that revivalists could find little in Mormonism to recommend it.⁵¹

Ralph Waldo Emerson had called Mormonism an "after-clap" of Puritanism, and in a sense he was right. The

⁵¹See Doctrine and Covenants, 93:36: "The glory of God is intelligence." 130:18-19: "Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come." These scriptures, however, have been widely misinterpreted by both Mormons and non-Mormons. The first requirement of any Saint was to learn the principles and doctrines of salvation. And since even this might take a lifetime, an overemphasis on the acquisition of secular knowledge might well endanger an individual's salvation.

Saints had little in common with Free Will Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians or the followers of Alexander Campbell. They had assimilated certain religious ideas of such seventeenth-century divines as Joseph Mede, Henry More, and Thomas Burnet. These optimistic chiliasts harnessed the millennium to the idea of progress, and believed that the transformation of the world into a utopia would be brought about by natural laws, with the result that even the Mathers thought not only of burning witches, but of beginning a program of inoculation against smallpox.⁵² This was the tradition impelling Timothy Dwight of Yale who, while enjoying a strong interest in natural science, could yet insist as late as 1813 that "the Millennium, in the full and perfect sense, will begin at a period, not far from the year 2000," because it would be established gradually, through man's own efforts. To Dwight as to Joseph Smith the utopian society would be realized "not by miracles, but by means."⁵³ The impact of these ideas on Mormonism, given

⁵²Ernest Fuveson, Millennium and Utopia (Berkeley, Cal., 1949).

⁵³Timothy Dwight, Sermon, Delivered in Boston . . . (Boston, 1813), pp. 25-26.

its solid New England base confirms the presence of a strong rationalistic and pragmatic strain in Puritanism.⁵⁴

The political Kingdom of God was one of the strongest expressions of this progressive meliorism in Mormon history. As indicated, church leaders believed that earthly governments would not vanish overnight and be replaced by the government of God. There would be an intermediate period when the political Kingdom of God and the other governments of the earth would exist side by side. Christ would not return until the Kingdom of God had become a prosperous nation.

The role of the Kingdom of God in the framework of a progressive philosophy of history caused considerable intellectual difficulties for the Kingdom and for the Saints. Although Mormons believed that the Kingdom could not be built without exerting all the efforts of which they were capable, they also knew that it would never be accomplished until the Lord lent his hand. Believing that God inspired the history of man, they had assurance that such aid was forthcoming.

⁵⁴Important is David B. Davis, "The New England Origins of Mormonism," The New England Quarterly, XXVI (1953), 147-168.

But it had to come through natural means. The will of the Lord, then, had to be read in the processes of history. Here were revealed signs of the times more significant than steamboat explosions and hurricanes.

Discerning the will of God through history, even for a prophet, was like walking a tightrope. Prophets were prone to transform anticipation into reality. The Saints soon learned that the will of God could not be influenced. They also knew that the Lord's hand would not move unassisted. Guiding the Kingdom of God through history, as it turned out, proved difficult even for prophets. At the beginning of the Civil War, for instance, the Saints were sure that the political Kingdom of God was about to become independent of the United States. But by 1864, it was all too obvious that they had misread the signs. God's purposes clearly had not coincided with the wishes of the Saints. Thus it had been earlier, and thus it would be later. At one moment, the growth of the Kingdom of God was expected to be rapid, at another its development was believed

to be gradual and difficult.⁵⁵ As the years wore on, the Saints grew understandably weary of attempting to usher in the millennial kingdom through their own efforts. Repairing to the mountaintops might have its advantages, after all. Therefore, it was not persecution alone that prompted the Saints to postpone to an undetermined future their attempts to establish the political Kingdom. In fact, persecution generally heightened the millennial expectations of the Saints. In this respect, they were no different than the Jews and early Christians, who frequently turned to millennialism as an escape from persecution, hoping that the messianic kingdom and its apocalyptic imagery might help solve present difficulties.⁵⁶

As Therald Jensen observed, Mormon millennial expectations moved in cycles. In times of crisis, chiliastic

⁵⁵During the nineteenth century, the Saints, for the most part, understandably believed that the growth of the Kingdom of God would be rapid. While this optimism was occasionally dampened, a more cautious attitude arose especially around the 1890's. Thus, H. W. Naisbitt, Journal of Discourses, XXII (1881), 74-82, believed that the development of the Kingdom of God would be gradual and difficult.

⁵⁶Shirley Jackson Case, The Millennial Hope (Chicago, 1918), p. 99.

anticipations usually ran high, while periods of political and economic stability witnessed a dampening of these hopes.⁵⁷ According to this theory, millennialism among the Mormons should have been on the rise during the late 1880's and early 1890's when Gentiles, aided by the United States Government, made an all out effort to finish off once and for all the recalcitrant Mormons. This, in fact, happened. Many Saints regarded the Edmunds law, which outlawed polygamy, as a harbinger of the end.⁵⁸ In 1890, not a few Mormons, remembering the earlier predictions of Joseph Smith, felt sure that Zion was to be redeemed in 1891. Whereupon the leaders of the Church assured their followers that no such event was contemplated for that year. Nobody, as the scriptures had indicated, would know the hour or the day when the Lord would come as a thief in the night. But the leaders felt they could be more positive

⁵⁷ Therald N. Jensen, "Mormon Theory of Church and State," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1938), pp. 67-68.

⁵⁸ Journal of Lorenzo H. Hatch (typed MS, Brigham Young University Library), p. 125.

than their overeager followers because too many of the predicted signs had not yet occurred.⁵⁹

One of the most important of these evidences, the establishment of the political Kingdom of God, was farther from realization than ever in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In fact, the political Kingdom of God was a major cause of Mormon persecution because of its suspected un-American nature. In 1890, therefore, the Saints could not hope that the Kingdom could be realized through natural means in the near future. The chiliasm of 1890 was rather a popular expression for the desire of a miraculous event, for a sudden deliverance of Zion from its enemies. But this kind of millennialism could not serve as a springboard for the establishment of a political kingdom of God. When it became apparent that the enemy was willing to retreat in return for some concessions, and that the Lord was not about to destroy the adversaries of the Kingdom, hopes for a miraculous delivery receded. The decline of millennialism in Mormon history thus coincided with the decline of the political Kingdom of God. After the Saints had come to

⁵⁹Millennial Star, LII (1890), 657, 692-93.

terms with the world, they took a more philosophic view of history. To this day, Mormons have held on to the millennial dream; but it has become a calm anticipation which they hope to realize through a kingdom of God that is synonymous with the church; missionary activity and welfare work are the means through which this kingdom is to grow and fill the earth. That Joseph Smith and his associates ever dreamed of establishing a political kingdom of God, most of them would never suspect.

CHAPTER II

THE ROLE OF THE MORMON KINGDOM OF GOD IN AMERICAN CULTURE

One of the most striking paradoxes of Mormon history is the relationship of the political Kingdom of God to the values of nineteenth-century American democracy. Mormonism reflected these values in an almost extreme form. Yet the political Kingdom of God was one of the major causes for the persecutions visited upon the Saints by nineteenth-century Americans. This paradox becomes more intelligible through an examination of the idea of the political Kingdom of God and the role the Mormons envisioned for this Kingdom in American culture.

Mormons take considerable pride in the knowledge that theirs is one of the only two formal, organized religions of native American origins.¹ They are fond of relating a conversation between Andrew Dickson White during his term as United States minister to the Court of St. Petersburg, and Count Leo Tolstoi, on the subject of religion in America.

¹The other one is Christian Science.

The Count had asked for White's opinion regarding what he called "the American religion," whereupon the minister informed his host that in the United States no church enjoyed preferential treatment by the state. Becoming somewhat impatient, Tolstoi replied that of course he knew that America had no state church. Yet, he continued, "the Church to which I refer originated in America and is commonly known as the Mormon Church. . . . The Mormon people teach the American religion."²

Tolstoi was not the first or the last observer to comment on the peculiarly American nature of Mormonism, and to understand that the characteristics of Mormonism differed significantly from other American religious movements. As Whitney Cross observed, the religious fervor of the Burned-over district, which gave birth to Mormonism, also influenced

²Thomas J. Yates, "Count Tolstoi and the 'American Religion'," The Improvement Era, XLII (1939), 94. White also relates that Tolstoi's agrarianism attracted him to Mormonism. "He preferred a religion which professed to have dug its sacred books out of the earth to one which pretended that they were let down from heaven." See The Autobiography of Andrew Dickson White (New York, 1907), II, 87. See also Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (2nd ed.; New York, 1951), p. 311.

the perfectionism of a Charles Grandison Finney and a John Humphrey Noyes, and produced a William Miller and a host of lesser religious enthusiasts.³ These, as well as the Methodists, and Baptists and Presbyterians especially, acquired peculiarly American characteristics from their environment, but the historical and intellectual roots of their religious persuasions had their origins in Europe and its Judaeo-Christian heritage.

Although Joseph Smith did not repudiate this heritage entirely, he attempted to divest it from its forms and its historical background. Mormonism was not to be merely another Christian sect. As Gaylon Caldwell observed: "It was a real religious creation, one intended to be to Christianity as Christianity was to Judaism, a reform and a consummation."⁴ The analogy, however, cannot be pushed

³Whitney R. Cross, The Burned-over District. The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850 (Ithaca, New York, 1950).

⁴Gaylon L. Caldwell, "Mormon Conceptions of Individual Rights and Political Obligation" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1952), p. 7.

too far, since Christianity repudiated the ideas of a chosen people, and of religious nationalism, and substituted for them a catholic world church. Mormonism also claimed to be a world religion, applicable to all mankind, but its mission was to be fulfilled through a peculiar identification with American nationalism. This force, in turn, was to be the catalyst for a specific Mormon nationalism expressed through the ideas of a chosen people and a political kingdom of God that was to rule the world.

As a secular dream, this concept was not, of course, original. The founding fathers had been inspired by the belief that they were creating not only a new government, but also were acting out a providential pageant in the Promised Land. As John Adams put it: "I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scene and design in providence for the illumination of the ignorant and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth."⁵ James

⁵The Works of John Adams, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston, 1856), I, 66.

Madison wrote somewhat ironically of Gouverneur Morris that "he flattered himself he came here in some degree as a Representative of the whole human race."⁶ Thomas Jefferson, writing to Joseph Priestley, affirmed:

" . . . we feel that we are acting under obligations not confined to the limits of our own society. It is impossible not to be sensible that we are acting for all mankind."⁷ As a secular dream, this "American Idea of Mission" has always persisted in national values.⁸

This secular notion was nonetheless subject to significant theological influences. As Sherwood Eddy observed, "the religious ideal of the Kingdom of God was causally related to the American Dream."⁹ The churches

⁶The Writings of James Madison, ed. Gaillard Hunt (New York, 1902), III, 359.

⁷The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, ed. H. A. Washington (New York, 1859), IV, 440-41.

⁸See especially Edward McNall Burns, The American Idea of Mission (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1957).

⁹Sherwood Eddy, The Kingdom of God and the American Dream. The Religious and Secular Ideals of American History (New York and London, 1941), p. 116.

took up the battle cry, and few institutions in American life have been able to equal them as vehicles of nationalistic enthusiasm. Mormonism shared in this enthusiasm. More than this, it provided a religious foundation for that enthusiasm going far beyond the religious nationalism of most American Protestant churches. The nationalism of Protestantism always remained the handmaiden of a secular American Faith. Joseph Smith reversed this relationship by repudiating the historical forms of the Judaeo-Christian heritage, and by substituting for them a framework that gave not only church history, but also American history in general pre-Columbian native roots. Mormonism in a sense represented America's religious declaration of independence. As A. Leland Jamison observed, Mormonism was "at once an irreconcilable Christian heresy and the most typically American theology yet formulated on this continent."¹⁰

The repudiation of old world religious origins was already foreshadowed when Smith, as a young boy of fourteen

¹⁰A. Leland Jamison, "Religions on the Christian Perimeter," in The Shaping of American Religion, ed. James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison (Princeton, New Jersey, 1961), p. 214.

had his first vision in a small grove behind his father's farm. Following the advice of Jas. 1:5, he had retired there to find out whether he should join the Methodists, Baptists or Presbyterians.¹¹ No one was more startled than Smith himself when God the Father and Jesus Christ purportedly appeared to him, informing him that he "must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt."¹²

Smith had this vision in the year 1820. Yet, he had to wait another ten years before God purportedly gave him permission to restore the Gospel of Jesus Christ in unadulterated form. This restoration signified a complete break with the traditions of European Christianity. Most Protestant Churches had of course broken the apostolic succession, but they also affirmed that the Bible was the

¹¹"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

¹²Joseph Smith, The Pearl of Great Price (Salt Lake City, 1951), ed. Joseph Smith 2:19.

sole and complete record of the Word of God, serving as an authoritative guide after which Christians could pattern their lives, and as a source of inspiration to those who believed in the priesthood of all believers. European Protestantism as it was transmitted to America thus was paradoxical. Its break with the past was at once too radical and not sufficient. Lacking a central authority and the tradition of an apostolic succession, churches and sects proliferated, with each claiming to be the only one interpreting the Bible correctly. Biblical exegesis, however, was itself part of the historical development of Christianity. The reformers, affirmed Smith, would never be able to arrive at the original intentions of Christ through the Bible alone, especially since it had been corrupted through faulty translations.¹³ The "great and abominable church, which is the mother of abominations, whose foundation is the devil" had corrupted the tree of Christianity;¹⁴ the sects and churches of the reformers

¹³Ibid., The Articles of Faith, article 8.

¹⁴Book of Mormon, I Nephi, 14:9.

were branches of this tree. Now, asked Smith, could the branches succeed in restoring the trunk to its former vigor? He believed it impossible. A new tree had to be planted, uncontaminated by the "great and abominable church." The restoration of the Gospel could only be effected through the transmission of the apostolic authority through heavenly messengers commissioned by Jesus Christ. It was in this manner, Smith affirmed, that he received divine commission to organize the Church of Christ in 1830.¹⁵

The primary requirements for the restoration of the gospel were thus fulfilled. A church without a past, however, was like a tree without roots. Since the Bible was the word of God only as far as it was translated correctly a new scripture providing historical authority for the word of God was necessary.¹⁶ The Book of Mormon filled this gap. Having sprung from native American soil, where Smith claimed it had rested for fourteen-hundred years, uncontaminated by

¹⁵Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith 2:66-75.

¹⁶Ibid., The Articles of Faith, article 8.

human hands, it provided American Christianity with a scripture presumably superior to that of the old world.

Theologically, the Book of Mormon was a new witness for Christ in America. Lehi, a Hebrew prophet living in Jerusalem around 600 B.C., was warned by the Lord to flee with his family in order to escape the impending Babylonian captivity of the Jews. The hand of the Lord guided the refugees through the Arabian desert and across the Indian Ocean and the Pacific to a promised land, America. Here Lehi's descendants became a mighty people, building cities and cultivating the soil. As true Israelites, they adhered to the prophetic tradition of their forefathers, which had predicted the coming of a Messiah. After his death and resurrection in Palestine, Christ appeared to the inhabitants of the New World, preached and performed miracles, and laid the foundation of a church, just as he had done in Palestine. Before his departure he ordained twelve disciples who were to preach the gospel to their fellow Americans. This American church flourished for several centuries, until a fratricidal war destroyed this advanced civilization after it had departed from its Christian

precepts. Only a degenerate race which had refused to accept the Gospel survived; these were the ancestors of the modern Indians. The civilized half of the Israelitic descendants had kept records of metal; before the final destruction of this group, one of the last survivors buried these records in a hill, where they were found by Joseph Smith through guidance by a heavenly messenger in 1823. Here, Joseph Smith taught, was further proof of the divinity of Christ; but here also, was a more perfect account of Christ's ministry, unspoiled by human corruption.

The Book of Mormon was the expression of an American quest for a usable past. In the opinion of Peter Meinhold it represents a native American historical consciousness which to this degree and intensity is not duplicated in the entire historical range of American thought.¹⁷

Viewed superficially, the Book of Mormon is an obvious and for some historians not a very original attempt to explain the origin of the American Indians. That Smith

¹⁷Peter Meinhold, "Die Anfaenge des Amerikanischen Geschichtsbewusstseins," Saeculum, V (1954), 65-86.

assigned the original Americans to the Near East and made them descendants of the House of Israel was very much in keeping with ideas prevalent in his time.¹⁸ But unlike previous attempts to explain the origin of the Indians, Smith's effort was merely incidental to a more imaginative motivation to seize upon the obvious and make the Indians the descendants of a civilized race, providing America with a history that could equal in tradition that of the Old World. Smith continued the historical logic of the Book of Mormon through a revelation in the Doctrine of Covenants, which explained that these Israelite ancestors of the native Americans were themselves but transplanted Americans. Originally, the Garden of Eden had been in the New World. After Adam was cast out of Paradise, he had dwelt in the land of Adam-ondi-Ahman, located in the Mississippi Valley, in Daviess County, Missouri. The presence of the patriarchal Old Testament cultures in the Near East found a simple enough explanation in the Flood; Noah had drifted on the waters for forty days; obviously he

¹⁸The most notable book advancing this theory was Ethan Smith, View of the Hebrews: or the Ten Tribes of Israel in America (Poultney, Vt., 1823).

would not land at the same spot where he had embarked. Thus, Smith assigned the entire ante-diluvian history of the Old Testament to the New World. The term "New World" thus became a misnomer, because America was really the cradle of man and of civilization. Joseph Smith had in this way created a past that made it possible to conjure from the bones of an American Adam and his pre-Columbian descendants an image of America that could motivate those who believed in this past to re-create the Garden of Eden in its original setting. It was no accident that the New Jerusalem was to be erected in the vicinity of the location where Adam presumably had dwelt after his expulsion from the Garden of Eden, in Jackson County, Missouri.¹⁹ To the Mormons, the search for a usable past was thus inseparably connected to the quest for an American paradise to be established in the future.²⁰ And the establishment

¹⁹ Doctrine and Covenants, Section 116.

²⁰ Charles L. Sanford claims in The Quest for Paradise. Europe and the American Moral Imagination (Urbana, Ill, 1961), that the myth of the Garden of Eden is the driving force American culture. Strangely enough, Sanford fails to mention the Mormons with as much as a word.

of the political Kingdom of God was an integral part of this quest.

This political Kingdom of God was to be the true expression of an American political heritage which, like its religious heritage, no longer had to look for European precedents after the establishment of Mormonism. From its very beginning, taught the Book of Mormon, America was destined to be a land of freedom. The first immigrants to the New World were told that God was sending them to

a land of promise, which was choice above all other lands, which the Lord God had preserved for a righteous people . . . and whatsoever nation shall possess it, shall be so free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ.²¹

Because the Nephites, as the presumed Hebrew descendants are called in the Book of Mormon, failed to obey this injunction, they were destroyed. This would be the fate of all who turned from the true religion, and who would pervert the ancient American ideals of political freedom.²²

²¹Book of Mormon, Ether 2:21.

²²Ibid.

The American continent was to be the stage for the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ and of the ancient liberties of mankind in the latter days. Hence God had purposely hidden the knowledge of its existence from the rest of the world until the time had ripened for the fulfilment of His purposes. When that time came, God's spirit sent Columbus to the Promised Land to open it to a new race of free men: "This land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles. . . . For it is wisdom in the Father that they should be established in this land and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father."²³ Thus, the American revolution was part of a plan decreed by God to achieve the freedom of the New World, a freedom to be preserved through a Constitution drafted by divinely inspired men specifically "raised up unto this very purpose."²⁴

Mormonism was to be the culmination of this grand design. "The United States of America," wrote Parley P. Pratt,

²³Ibid., 2. Nephi, 10:11; 3. Nephi, 21:4.

²⁴Doctrine and Covenants, 101:80.

. . . was the favoured nation raised up, with institutions adapted to the protection and free development of the necessary truths, and their practical results. And that Great Prophet, Apostle and Martyr--JOSEPH SMITH was the Elias, the Restorer, the presiding Messenger, holding the keys of the "Dispensation of the fulness of times."²⁵

Without the United States, continued Pratt, this consummation would not have been possible. For the "grain of mustard seed," the nucleus of the Kingdom of God, needed "a land of free institutions, where such organizations could be legally developed and claim constitutional protection. No other country in the world provided the necessary conditions for the establishment of the Kingdom of God."²⁶ The divine origin and destiny of the American Republic was thus one of the most basic of Mormon values. It is, therefore, one of the almost tragic ironies of American history when Protestant ministers, after the Civil War, believed they had received a divine commission not only to "Christianize" but to "Americanize" the reputedly disloyal Mormons. Why these ministers believed such a mission

²⁵Parley P. Pratt, Key to Theology, pp. 76-77.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 79-81.

to be necessary becomes partially intelligible through an examination of the political theory of the Mormon Kingdom of God.

One accusation Christian ministers, government officials, and professional and amateur anti-Mormon crusaders repeated again and again, and one that stood at the top of their anti-Mormon syllabus of errors, was that the Mormons had violated the sacred American principle of the separation of church and state. Many accusations the Mormons bore without protest. Others they proudly and defiantly acknowledged. But of all the charges levelled against them they denied none more vehemently than the one that in their society church and state were one. Yet, to the Gentiles, no fact was more openly established. Was not Brigham Young spiritual as well as political leader of his people? Did not most of the members of the hierarchy hold important political offices? Did not the Mormon priestgood, in fact, rule the Saints both spiritually and temporally? To the Gentiles, these facts were too obvious to be denied. The Mormon protestations to the contrary thus even lacked the grace of elegant lies. If black was to appear as white, the Gentiles hinted, the Mormons had to use more clever tactics.

Yet the Saints honestly believed that they were being truthful. "No people," thundered George Q. Cannon at a General Conference of the Church, "are less open to the charge of mingling the two and seeking to destroy the distinctions between church and state than the Latter-day Saints; any attempt on the part of any one to say that we have any such design, is the attack of an enemy and is untrue."²⁷ To the Gentiles, such denials were merely a proof of Mormon hypocrisy.

Cannon preferred to accept the charge of hypocrisy rather than to prove to his adversaries the truthfulness of his position. He could point to the Mormon scriptures and show that the Doctrine and Covenants prohibited an established church.²⁸ He could further point to the Mormon reverence for the Constitution. But to the Gentiles,

²⁷Quoted in Truth (Salt Lake City), II (1936), 37.

²⁸Doctrine and Covenants, 134:9: "We do not believe it just to mingle religious influence with civil government, whereby one religious society is fostered and another proscribed in its spiritual privileges, and the individual rights of its members, as citizens, denied."

neither of these were proof. It was primarily because opponents of the Mormons in Congress believed that Cannon, as territorial representative, came to Washington not only as an elected representative but as the emissary of the Mormon priesthood that he was denied his seat in the House in 1882. His polygamy merely provided a better pretext to oust him. In defense of his right to his seat, Cannon had insisted that he represented no church, but served in Washington strictly as the legally qualified political representative of Utah Territory.²⁹ But to no avail.

Part of the difficulty was that he could not be as open with Congress as he was with his own people. To the Saints, he tried to explain as much as possible about the Mormon theory of separation between church and state without revealing secrets which he had sworn to keep when he became a member of the Council of Fifty. For only in the sessions of this Council did the Church leaders amplify on all the ramifications relating to the Mormon theory of church and state. The fact is that to Congress and the Gentiles in general the practical application of the Mormon

²⁹U.S. Congress. Congressional Record, 47th Congress, 1st Sess., April 19, 1882, p. 3068.

theory of the separation of church and state would no doubt have been even more distressing than the supposed union of the two. The Mormon idea of the separation of church and state could be put into operation only through the realization of the political Kingdom of God. The Mormon leaders preferred the Gentiles to believe in distorted and even totally erroneous interpretations of Mormon doctrine if correction of the error would result in revealing the secrets of the political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty. That organization had to remain secret at all costs.³⁰

Church leaders, nevertheless, occasionally hinted strongly at the existence of the political Kingdom in order to clarify important points to their followers. The theory of the separation of church and state was one of them. Cannon amplified on this doctrine in a sermon to the Saints:

We have been taught from the beginning this important principle, that the Church of

³⁰The Saints had good reasons to keep the Council of Fifty a secret organization. Even as it was, the suspected activities of the council were one of the major causes for conflict between Saints and Gentiles.

God is distinct from the Kingdom of God. Joseph gave us the pattern before he died. He gave his brethren an example that has not been forgotten to this day. He impressed it upon them, that men, not members of the church, could be members of the kingdom that the Lord will set up when he reigns. He picked out the youngest among them, and told them to be sure and remember this. In the midst of all of us who understand this matter there is a clear distinction between the church in its ecclesiastical capacity and that which may be termed the government of God in its political capacity.³¹

Gentiles, understandably, would have been reluctant to become members of such a kingdom. But their theoretical inclusion was indispensable to Mormonism in order to uphold the idea of separation of church and state. More than that, if the idea was to be followed to its logical conclusion, the Gentiles would even have the right to sit in the governing council of the political Kingdom. "Though a man may not even believe in any religion," insisted Brigham Young, "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

³¹ Truth, II (1936), 37.

and control those who make no profession of religion at all."³²

Therefore, Mormons reasoned that if the congressional representative from Utah Territory also happened to be a Latter-day Saint, this was nothing more than a highly probable coincidence since the majority of the inhabitants of the territory were Mormons. Separation of church and state, the Saints insisted, did not imply that "religious people should not soil their hands in political affairs." Such a policy would ultimately leave the control of civil government to irreligious men.³³ Still, in a state controlled by one church, union of church and state would be almost an inevitable result. The political theory of the Kingdom of God, therefore, was nothing less than a heroic attempt to reconcile kingdom building with the American political tradition.

The attempt was not entirely successful. A theoretical separation between the political Kingdom and the Church

³²Truth, II (1936), 37.

³³Mark Cannon, "The Mormon Issue in Congress, 1872-1882," pp. 238-239.

was one thing, its practical application quite another. The members of the Council of Fifty could insist with vehemence that the combination of ecclesiastical and political office in the hands of one man did not represent union of church and state, but they would not have convinced the Gentiles, especially if the latter had known the whole truth. The fact remained that the Mormon hierarchy also held most of the important political offices from the early days of the Church in Kirtland and Missouri, until the abdication of political control around the turn of the century. Likewise, as long as the Council of Fifty existed, its head was the president of the Church.

That the idea of separation between church and state was more of a semantic distinction than even its originators probably wished it to be, is revealed through the role both the Church and the Mormon priesthood were to play in establishing the political Kingdom of God. For if the Church was separate and distinct from the political Kingdom of God, the former was, nevertheless, the precursor of the latter. According to Brigham Young, the political Kingdom was to grow "out of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

Saints."³⁴ John Taylor, elaborating on this idea, insisted that "before there could be a kingdom of God, there must be a church of God," because it would be impossible to introduce "the law of God among a people who would not be subject to and be guided by the spirit of revelation."³⁵ The political programs of the various utopian societies would ultimately fail because they lacked the guidance of the spirit of God.

The government of the Kingdom of God, fortunately, was to be spared this fate because it was subject to the jurisdiction of the priesthood. If Parley P. Pratt is to be believed, the powers of the Mormon priesthood were indeed vast. It held "the right to give laws and commandments to individuals, churches, rulers, nations and the world; to appoint, ordain and establish constitutions and kingdoms;

³⁴ Journal of Discourses, II (1855), 317; see also Heber C. Kimball, ibid., X (1865), 240-241; Wilford Woodruff, ibid., II (1855), 192-193; Orson Pratt, ibid., XIII (1871), p. 126.

³⁵ ibid., XVII (1875), 137.

to appoint kings, presidents, governors or judges."³⁶

Pratt's brother Orson, whose influence on Mormon theology was to be even more pervading and lasting, developed this idea into a theory of legitimacy that was not to sit very well with the Gentiles:

The kingdom of God . . . is the only legal government that can exist in any part of the universe. All other governments are illegal and unauthorized. God, having made all beings and worlds, has the supreme right to govern them by his own laws, and by officers of his own appointment. Any people attempting to govern themselves by laws of their own making, and by officers of their own appointment, are in direct rebellion against the kingdom of God.³⁷

³⁶Key to Theology, p. 70.

³⁷Orson Pratt, The Kingdom of God (Liverpool, 1851), p. 1. See also John Taylor's statement in Journal of Discourses, I (1854), 230: "Let us now notice our political position in the world. What are we going to do? We are going to possess the earth. Why? Because it belongs to Jesus Christ, and he belongs to us, and we to him. We are all one, and will take the kingdom and possess it under the whole heavens, and reign over it for ever and ever. Now, ye kings and emperors, help yourselves, if you can. This is the truth, and it may as well be told at this time as at any other."

Church and Kingdom thus had come full circle. For the most part, they were separate in theory only. Ultimately no distinction could be drawn between the two. The priesthood that controlled the church controlled the state also. Parley P. Pratt even went so far as to insist that "any system of religion should include every branch of government that [a people] could possibly need for dwelling with each other." The fact that the religions of the world insisted upon a distinction between themselves and the "policy of civil government" was an indication not only of their ineffectiveness but also of their lack of divinity.³⁸ A true religious system provided as well for a political government. "When I say a religious system," continued Pratt,

I mean that which unites principles of political government and religious. . . . Whether men realize it or not, when they say, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," it is as much to say "O God, sweep away all the falsehood and abuses of power there are in the world, whether religious or political; . . . And in the place of all these false governments and religions, in political and social life, introduce that

³⁸Journal of Discourses, I (1851), 173-174.

eternal government, that pure order of things, those eternal principles and institutions, which govern society in those better worlds, the worlds of immortality and eternal life.³⁹

Lacking the Mormon priesthood, a Gentile member of the governing council of the political Kingdom would have found himself in an extremely tenuous position under such a system, however tolerantly the priest-legislators might have exercised their authority.

Still, in theory, the political Kingdom of God was to be a pluralistic society that granted wide latitude to the individual differences of its prospective members. Such a latitude was only possible if the Kingdom and the Church were separate organizations. In no other way could the political Kingdom of God have become the vehicle for a distinctive Mormon interpretation of the relationship between natural law and individual rights.

This interpretation was the response of a suppressed minority against majority rule. The rule of the majority was based on a natural rights philosophy wedded to the idea

³⁹Ibid.

of natural law. The Mormons believed with Alexis de Tocqueville that this concept of natural rights frequently and paradoxically led to the denial of these rights to a minority group.⁴⁰ The Mormons could talk from first-hand experience about the tyranny of the majority. As a result, they looked with considerable distaste on the idea of natural rights and its natural offspring, majority rule. They substituted for it a doctrine of individual rights that was also ultimately grounded in natural law, but with the important qualification that under its provisions the individual did not have to bow to the will of the majority.⁴¹ This idea was analogous to Calhoun's doctrine of concurrent majority, although the Mormons did not cite him as an authority.

Through the individual rights philosophy of the political Kingdom of God, the Saints hoped to show their fellow

⁴⁰Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, trans. Henry Reeves (New York, n.d.), I, 280-294.

⁴¹See Caldwell, "Mormon Conceptions of Individual Rights" p. 242; also Andrus, Joseph Smith and World Government, pp. 33-35.

Americans how they expected to be treated by them by indicating how they themselves would act towards minority groups. According to Brigham Young, the political Kingdom of God was

. . . to send forth those laws and ordinances that shall be suitable and that shall apply themselves to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; that will apply themselves to the mother Church, "the holy Catholic Church;" they will commend themselves to every class of infidels, and will throw their protecting arms around the whole human family, protecting them in their rights. If they wish to worship a white dog, they will have the privilege; if they wish to worship the sun they will have the privilege; if they wish to worship a man they will have the privilege, and if they wish to worship the 'unknown God' they will have the privilege; This kingdom will circumscribe them all and will issue laws and ordinances to protect them in their rights-- every right that every people, sect and person can enjoy, and the full liberty that God has granted to them without molestation . . . the kingdom of God will protect every person, every sect and all people upon the face of the whole earth in their legal rights.⁴²

Young, no doubt, was engaging here in some overly optimistic rhetoric. It seems doubtful that the Gentiles

⁴²Journal of Discourses, XVII (1875), 156-57; see also ibid., II (1855), 309-10; II (1856), 256; XI (1867), 275; XII (1869), 113-14.

would have been eager to have their rights protected by such a kingdom. Furthermore, the harsh realities of life made the application of such theories difficult even by the Saints themselves. When Gladden Bishop, who had started a rival Mormon sect, brought some of his followers to Salt Lake City in an attempt to proselytize for his version of the Kingdom of God, Young seems to have ignored his theories temporarily, as attested to by the rapid departure of the Gladdenites from the Territory.⁴³

The doctrine of individual rights reinforced the Mormons in their rejection of the idea of majority rule and of its underlying assumption, the sovereignty of the people. More fundamentally, the idea of popular sovereignty and majority rule was incompatible with the notion of priesthood government. By its very definition, the priesthood

⁴³Speaking against the Gladdenites, Brigham Young declared in a sermon in Salt Lake City: "I say, rather than that apostates should flourish here, I will unsheath my bowie knife, and conquer or die. Now, you nasty apostates, clear out, or judgment will be put to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." Journal of Discourses, I (1854), 83. It should be remembered, however, that Young was addicted to hyperbolic expressions. Most of his vengeance was rhetorical.

obtained its authority from God, and not from the people. The priesthood, therefore, had a divine right to rule. As a result, the Mormons believed it to be "the best legislative body there is upon the face of the earth."⁴⁴ It followed that Mormon leaders, like their Puritan predecessors, had little faith in the ability of the people to govern themselves. Joseph Smith once declared that "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."⁴⁵ John Taylor's reservations regarding popular sovereignty were even more pointed: "We talk sometimes about vox populi, vox Dei . . . the voice of the people is the voice of God; yet sometimes it is the voice of the Devil, which would be more proper by vox populi, vox Diaboli; for the voice of the people is frequently the voice of the Devil."⁴⁶ But here, Taylor apparently somewhat was carried away by his rhetoric. The Book of Mormon, discussing the matter

⁴⁴Ibid., VI (1859), 129.

⁴⁵History of the Church, V. 61.

⁴⁶Journal of Discourses, VII (1850), 326.

with more restraint, reflects more accurately the position of the Mormon hierarchy. When the sons of King Mosiah refused the kingship, the aged ruler thought it wise to establish a republic in spite of his belief that "it would be expedient that [the people] should always have kings to rule over them" if they governed justly and in accordance with the will of God. But unfortunately, kings frequently ruled according to their whims. A republic, therefore, would be more desirable because the majority of the people usually desired that which is right. If ever the time should come "that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity," then the "judgments of God" would be poured out among the people.⁴⁷

Although the people, however, had a right to choose under the political theory of the Kingdom of God, they did not have a right to direct government. Parley P. Pratt made this quite clear when he observed that the voice of the people "is rather a sanction, a strength and support to that which God chooses. But they do not confer the authority in the first place, nor can they take it

⁴⁷Book of Mormon, Mosiah, 29:13.

away."⁴⁸ The practical results of such a philosophy, to the Gentiles at any rate, seemed singularly un-American. When William H. Hooper, for example, "campaigned" for the seat of territorial delegate to Congress in 1865, Apostle George A. Smith, who accompanied the aspirant on his election campaign, informed the Saints of Mount Pleasant: "What we do we should do as one man. Our system should be Theo-Democracy,--the voice of the people consenting to the voice of God."⁴⁹ Needless to say, Hooper was "elected." So were all political candidates nominated by the hierarchy as long as the Church controlled politics. For over fifty years, Mormon elections were hardly anything more than a "sustaining" of the official candidates. If, however, on rare occasions the people might actually nominate a candidate not approved of by the hierarchy, "counsel" by the leaders usually sufficed to bring about the desired results.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Millennial Star, V (1844), 150.

⁴⁹Journal History, July 12, 1865. George A. Smith's statement, and numerous others like it by other church leaders, were all based on Joseph Smith's pronouncement, made in 1844: "I go for a theo-democracy." Journal History, April 15, 1844. See also Times and Seasons, IV (December 1, 1842), 24-25.

⁵⁰See below, pp. 247-48.

Such a system, the Mormons believed, made political parties both unnecessary and undesirable. Brigham Young was thus only consistent by claiming that "when political opposition is permitted, we admit the existence of error and corruption somewhere."⁵¹ If a man, therefore, opposed the official church candidate, he was questioning the divine sanction under which this candidate had been nominated. Such a man was clearly on the road to apostasy.⁵² The world too would be better off without political parties. They contained the "seeds" of the destruction of the [United States] government." Young concluded with the inescapable logic that "every government lays the foundation of its own downfall when it permits what are called democratic elections."⁵³ Since there is one absolute truth, and only one source for this truth, editorialized the Deseret News, the "people only disagree where they have not sufficient knowledge of the subject under consideration, or through

⁵¹Journal of Discourses, XIV (1872), 93.

⁵²ibid.

⁵³ibid., p. 93.

wickedness, which is itself the offspring of ignorance."⁵⁴

Yet the Saints were neither ignorant nor wicked, as attested to by a description of Mormon theo-democracy in the Millennial Star:

At mass meetings, held in all the principal precincts, delegates are chosen by unanimous vote to meet in a convention, and select the names of individuals to fill the various vacant offices. In case of any dispute or dubiety on the mind of the convention, the Prophet of God, who stands at the head of the Church, decides. He nominates, the convention endorses, and the people accept the nomination. . . . So in the Legislature itself. The utmost freedom of speech free from abuse is indulged in; but any measure that cannot be unanimously decided on, is submitted to the President of the Church, who, by the wisdom of God decides the matter, and all the Councillors and Legislators sanction the decision. There are no hostile parties, no opposition, no Whig and Tory, Democrat and Republican, they are all brethren, legislating for the common good, and the word of the Lord, through the head of the Church guides, counsels, and directs.⁵⁵

To the Gentiles, such theories and practices were, if not proofs of disloyalty, an indication that the Mormons had departed significantly from the American political tradition.

⁵⁴Deseret News, (July 19, 1865).

⁵⁵Millennial Star, XXVI (1876), 744, 746.

These accusations the Saints vehemently denied. In fact, the leaders of the political Kingdom of God professed to believe that their political system came closer to the original intention of the founding fathers than that of the United States under men like Martin Van Buren, James K. Polk, or James Buchanan. These men, by failing to come to the aid of persecuted minorities, had made a mockery of the American dream.⁵⁶

The Mormons thus attempted to reconcile their divergence from the generally accepted standards of American democracy by looking to a mythical past and pointing to an idealized future. The Saints would be a bulwark against the present perversion of the American values by corrupt politicians. The time would come when the political Kingdom of God would be the only power left in America capable of preserving the ideals of liberty. The time would come when the Constitution, "hanging by a thread," would be

⁵⁶History of the Church, VI, 203-204.

preserved by the Elders of the Church.⁵⁷ What the Saints failed to realize was that even if they had been able to discern the purposes of the founding fathers, events had made many of these purposes irrelevant by the 1830's.

The Saints, therefore, were not overly bothered by the apparent discrepancy between the political Kingdom of God and the realities of American political institutions, at least not as far as this discrepancy might adversely reflect on the Americanism of the Mormons. Brigham Young insisted that under ideal conditions the government of the political Kingdom of God closely resembled the government of the United States. "Few, if any," he declared,

. . . 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; . . .

The Constitution and laws of the United States resemble a theocracy more closely than

⁵⁷ Perhaps no other statement of Smith has become as permanent a part of Mormon folklore. It can be found in scores of pioneer diaries. As an example see "The Life Story of Mosiah Lyman Hancock" (MS, Brigham Young University Library), p. 29: "The Mormons will save the country when its liberty hangs by a hair, as it were." See also Preston Nibley, "What of Joseph Smith's Prophecy?" Deseret News, Church Section, (December 5, 1948).

any government now on earth. . . . Even now the form of Government of the United States differs but little from the Kingdom of God.⁵⁸

The main difference between the two, according to Young, was that the subjects of the Kingdom of God recognized "the will and dictation of the Almighty."⁵⁹ But Young failed to perceive that this precisely was the all important difference between the two. The crux of the matter was that the ideas of divine sovereignty and popular sovereignty were mutually exclusive. The Saints were thus divided between the absolute claims of revealed religion and a social

⁵⁸Journal of Discourses, VI (1859), 342. Young, in elaborating on this theory, declared that the Kingdom would be a "true democratic theocracy." (ibid., p. 346), and that the people would "find it a Republican Democratic Government." [ibid., VII (1860), 8.] He defined "a true Republican government" as being "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 a true Democracy. But Democracy as it is now is another thing. True Democracy or Republicanism, if it were rightly understood, ought to be Government of the United States." (ibid., p. 10).

⁵⁹Journal of Discourses, VI (1859), 342. Professor Hyrum L. Andrus, in Joseph Smith and World Government, p. 21, fully accepts the word of Brigham Young and other church authorities and agrees that the government of the Kingdom indeed resembled government under the Constitution

and political heritage which revelation had declared to be divinely inspired. Here was a paradox that seemed beyond solution. The Mormons thus had to temporize and claim that the paradox did not exist; by surrounding themselves with the trappings of democratic government they could pretend that in fact they were carrying out the true intentions of the founding fathers.

The way out of the dilemma lay in the melioristic, evolutionary view of history adopted by the Mormons.

Brigham Young made this clear in a discourse delivered to

very closely. He sees, for instance, a close relationship between the separation of powers under the United States Constitution and "a constitutional separation of powers between Zion and the political government;" but he fails to realize that any separation of powers in the Kingdom of God was highly theoretical. The President of the United States could hardly qualify for the office of Justice of the Supreme Court at the same time. But Brigham Young felt no compunction in exerting power directly not only in executive but also in judicial and legislative matters. As already indicated, if the legislature could come to no agreement, the dispute was submitted to the executive, whose authority as head of the Church was respected in all matters. Thus, when Justice Drummond attended a session of the territorial legislature at Fillmore in 1856, he was exceedingly annoyed when Young dispensed with the formalities of government and mixed politics and priesthood in his dual capacity as governor and head of the Church. See Nels Anderson, Desert Saints: The Mormon Frontier in Utah (Chicago, 1942, p. 161.

the Saints in 1860:

The signers of the Declaration of Independence and the framers of the Constitution were inspired from on high to do that work. But was that which was given them perfect, not admitting of any addition whatever? No; for if men know anything, they must know that the Almighty has never yet found a man in mortality that was capable, at the first intimation, at the first impulse to receive anything in a state of entire perfection. They laid the foundation, and it was for after generations to rear the superstructure upon it.⁶⁰

But the superstructure being reared by Democrats and Whigs was little to Young's liking. The edifice Young had in mind was to be raised by the statesmen of the Kingdom of God. Although the Saints considered the Constitution of the United States the best man had ever devised, it was to be but "one of those stepping stones to a future development in the progress of man."⁶¹ After the Kingdom of God had achieved "dominion over all the earth to the ends thereof," the Constitution and the laws governing this

⁶⁰ Journal of Discourses, VII (1860), 14.

⁶¹ Albert Carrington, ibid., XVII (1875), 165-66; Orson Pratt, III (1856), 71; John Taylor, XXI (1881), 31.

kingdom would "emanate from the throne of God."⁶² In fact, the constitution of the political Kingdom of God had been revealed to Joseph Smith before he organized the government of God. That it resembled that of the United States closely should not be surprising. In fact, Joseph Smith suggested that the revisions would only be minor.⁶³ It was no doubt this revised, revealed version, that Joseph Smith had in mind when he told his followers that the time would come when all nations would adopt "the God-given Constitution of the United States as a Paladium of Liberty and Equal Rights."⁶⁴ Ultimately, therefore, all contradictions between Mormonism and Americanism would disappear.

⁶²Parley P. Pratt, ibid., III (1856), 71-73.

⁶³Joseph Smith stated: "The only fault I find with the Constitution is it is not broad enough to cover the whole ground. Although it provides that all men shall enjoy religious freedom, yet it does not provide the manner by which that freedom can be preserved, nor for the punishment of government officers who refuse to protect the people in their religious rights, or punish those mobs, states, or communities who interfere with the rights of the people on account of their religion." History of the Church, VI, 57.

⁶⁴Johnson to Gibbs, p. 7.

if only the Saints could themselves determine what Americanism meant, and if the Gentiles would adapt themselves to Mormonism.

As long as the majority decided on the values of American Democracy, the Mormons were a little bit like the soldier on parade whose proud mother found him to be the only one in step. But who was in step depended entirely on the point of view. More than that, it depended on whose point of view could be enforced. The Saints' point of view contained a final paradox; for their version of the American dream could be enforced only through the destruction of the United States in its present form. "The day will come," exulted Parley P. Pratt, "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."⁶⁵ In the meantime, the Gentiles did their best to uproot the Kingdom of God. That they failed to destroy Mormonism in the process was largely due to the fact that the leaders of the

⁶⁵Journal of Discourses, III (1856), 71-73.

Kingdom finally bowed to the inevitable and relegated to an undisclosed future date the aspirations of the government of the Kingdom to rule the United States and the world.

CHAPTER III

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD

In the spring of 1844, Joseph Smith attempted to realize one of the most ambitious dreams of his entire career. On May 12 of that year he declared publicly: "I calculate to be one of the instruments of setting up the kingdom of Daniel by the word of the Lord, and I intend to lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world."¹ Few in his audience knew that the "kingdom" had already been established two months earlier, and that its foundation could be traced to the very beginnings of the Mormon Church in 1830.

At the General Conference of the Church in April, 1844, First Counselor Sidney Rigdon informed the Saints that he did "not know that anything has taken place in the history of this Church which we did not then [1830]

¹History of the Church, VI, 364.

believe."² Although Rigdon was exaggerating in an attempt to impress the congregation with his own power and importance, much of what he said that day can be verified through an analysis of Smith's character and career, especially ideas expressed by the Prophet in the early days of Mormonism. According to Rigdon, the leaders of the Church held secret meetings as early as 1830.

We were maturing plans fourteen years ago which we now can tell. . . . There we sat in secret and beheld the glorious visions and powers of the kingdom of heaven pass and repass. . . . We talked about the people coming as doves to the windows; and that nations should flock unto it; that they should come bending to the standard of Jesus, . . . and of whole nations being born in one day . . . and we began to talk about the kingdom of God as if we had the world at our command.³

Whole nations, however, could be born in a day only through the magic of rhetorical enthusiasm. The establishment of the Kingdom of God, let alone of Mormon world rule, required more than talk. Even the creation of the modest government of the Kingdom of God in 1844 was possible only

²Ibid., p. 290.

³Ibid., pp. 288-89.

through years of planning and preparation, trial and error, and much disheartening defeat. Again and again, the Prophet had to postpone his dream of setting up the kingdom predicted by Daniel. The establishment of the political Kingdom of God in 1844 was the culmination of efforts that had seemed on the verge of realization more than once, only to be dashed to pieces before their consummation.

Fundamental to all these efforts was the idea of Zion and its related concept of the gathering. As early as 1830 Smith revealed to his followers that he had been "called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect . . . unto one place upon the face of this land."⁴ Land and people were the obvious and primary requirements of an earthly kingdom of God. Mormon missionaries, fanning out to the far corners of the earth, instructed their converts that gathering to Zion was one of the basic tests of orthodoxy. "None of the Saints," admonished Orson Pratt, "can be dilatory upon this subject, and still retain the spirit of God. To neglect or be indifferent about gathering, is just as displeasing

⁴Doctrine and Covenants, 37:3.

in the sight of God as to neglect or be indifferent about baptism for the remission of sins."⁵

One of the first efforts to establish an earthly kingdom of God through gathering the Saints was made at Kirtland, Ohio. In the autumn of 1830, a group of Mormon missionaries had converted almost the entire Campbellite congregation of Sidney Rigdon to the new faith. Kirtland was rapidly transformed into a Mormon settlement, a gathering place for converts in the eastern United States. According to one reporter,

Kirtland presented the appearance of a modern religious Mecca. Like Eastern pilgrims [the Mormons] came full of zeal for their new religion. They came in rude vehicles, on horseback, on foot. They came almost any way, filling on their arrival every house, shop, and barn to the utmost capacity.⁶

Millennial Star, X (1848), 247. Important studies of various aspects of the gathering are Hamlin M. Cannon, "The 'Gathering' of British Mormons to Western America," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, American University, 1950); Gustive O. Larson, Prelude to the Kingdom, (Francestown, N.H., 1947); and William A. Mulder, Homeward to Zion (Minneapolis, 1957).

⁶Quoted in Ray B. West, Kingdom of the Saints (New York, 1957), p. 39. An excellent study of the Ohio period is R. Kent Fielding, "The Growth of the Mormon Church in Kirtland, Ohio" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1957).

Kirtland, however, was intended only as a temporary gathering place, or at best as a corner stake of the tent of Zion. The Ohio country was too crowded for the establishment of a Mormon empire. The Kingdom would have to be set up in a more uninhabited region. Indeed, Smith had taken the first steps in this direction in the summer of 1831, when he designated the town of Independence in Jackson County, Missouri, as the location for the New Jerusalem. Here, in the regions where Adam had presumably dwelt after his expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the Saints were promised an eternal inheritance. A first group of Mormon colonists, arriving in the summer of 1831, pooled their resources to buy as much land as possible and began life together under a communitarian system called the Order of Enoch.⁷

The projected center stake of Zion never was fully raised, however, and the inheritance in Jackson County only

⁷For studies of Mormon communitarianism in this period see especially Leonard J. Arrington, "Early Mormon Communitarianism: The Law of Consecration and Stewardship," Western Humanities Review, VII (1953), 341-469; Hamilton Gardner, "Communism Among the Mormons," Quarterly Journal of Economics, XXXVII (1922), 134-174; Joseph A. Geddes, The United Order Among the Mormons (Missouri Phase) (Salt Lake City, 1924); and William John McNiff, Heaven On Earth: A Planned Mormon Society (Oxford Ohio, 1940).

of short duration. The events of 1833 doomed the hopes of Smith and his followers. In that year, a Missouri mob damaged Mormon homes and smashed W. W. Phelps's printing press. The elaborate plat of the City of Zion which Joseph Smith had sent to Missouri in June of 1833 had to be realized elsewhere.⁸

When Oliver Cowdery reported news of these Missouri disorders to Smith in Kirtland, the Prophet at first counseled the Saints to obtain redress in the courts. The Mormons hired the firm of Wood, Reese, Doniphan, and Atchison to represent their interests.⁹ But when the Missouri rabble, on learning of Mormon intentions, resorted to new and even greater violence in the winter of 1833-34, the Mormon leader resolved to meet force with force. By a revelation given on February 24, 1834 in Kirtland, the

⁸History of the Church, I, 357-59; for the influence of Smith's ideas on later Mormon settlements see Lowry Nelson, The Mormon Village: A Pattern and Technique of Land Settlement (Salt Lake City, 1952).

⁹Alexander William Doniphan befriended the Mormons. In 1838, when Smith and some of his associates were ordered to be shot by a court martial of the Missouri militia, Doniphan, a colonel in the militia, refused to carry out the order and thus saved the Prophet's life.

Prophet proclaimed thus the will of the Lord:

Behold, I say unto you, the redemption of Zion must needs come by power; therefore, I will raise up unto my people a man, who shall lead them like as Moses led the children of Israel; for ye are the children of Israel, and of the seed of Abraham, and ye must needs be led out of bondage by power, and with a stretched out arm.¹⁰

The Prophet commissioned Parley P. Pratt and Lyman Wight to gather an army that would hopefully number five hundred men. Under the leadership of Smith himself, they were "to go up . . . unto the land of Zion . . . and organize my kingdom upon the consecrated land, and establish the children of Zion upon the laws and commandments which have been, and which shall be, given unto you."¹¹ Pratt and Wight marshalled their men without delay. On May 5, 1834, Zion's Camp, as the expedition had been named, left Kirtland. However, when the army of about two hundred men reached Missouri, it became apparent that the Mormon cause in Jackson County was lost. Military operations clearly

¹⁰Doctrine and Covenants, 103:15-17.

¹¹ibid., 103:34-35.

would be of no aid to the Saints and would only aggravate an already untenable situation. Smith realistically disbanded his army; for the time being, the dispossessed Saints resettled in the Missouri counties of Clay and Caldwell.

Judged from its immediate results, Zion's Camp was a Quixotic adventure, yet one of long-range significance for the future development of the political Kingdom of God. It set the precedent for the establishment of the military arm of the Kingdom. All future Mormon military organizations, including the Nauvoo Legion, and the army that directed the exodus to Utah, were patterned after Zion's Camp. The Mormons had thus achieved one of the important prerequisites of a nation state. Moreover, the Camp provided valuable training and experience for future leaders of the Church such as Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson and Parley P. Pratt, Charles C. Rich, George A. Smith, Wilford Woodruff, and many more.¹² As Young recalled, "I would not exchange the experience gained in that

¹² Roberts, in History of the Church, II, p. xxiii.

expedition for all the wealth of Geauga county."¹³

Few of the participants forgot that they had been charged to "organize my kingdom;" many of them participated in the organization of the political Kingdom of God in Nauvoo in 1844.

In 1836, most of the Saints abandoned Clay in favor of Caldwell County, which the Missouri legislature had created specifically for settling the Mormons. In 1838, those of the Kirtland Saints who were still faithful to the Prophet (after the collapse of the Kirtland Safety Society Bank Company in 1837) joined their Missouri brethren to establish Zion with Far West in Caldwell County as the center. More than five thousand Mormons flocked to the new gathering place. All available men volunteered their labor for the excavation for the construction of a temple. Again, high hopes were entertained for the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

Supported by Governor Lilburn Boggs's cruel extermination order, hostile mobs once again ejected the Saints from

¹³ Ibid., p. xxiv.

their hoped for Missouri Zion. Not until the Mormons found hospitality in the neighboring state of Illinois in the winter of 1839-40 at Commerce, a swampy town located at a bend of the Mississippi, did it appear that the Saints had finally found peace, and sufficient real-estate to transform their dream into reality. It was here that the Prophet, for the first time, could fully realize the plans for the City of Zion which he had originally dreamt of establishing in Jackson County.¹⁴

Smith issued a call to the Mormons to gather to the new Zion. Swelled by a tide of new converts from England, the Saints poured into the promised land. The Prophet had changed the name of the village to Nauvoo, "the Beautiful." By 1844 it boasted of population of over 12,000. A charter granted to the Mormons by the Illinois legislature

¹⁴An important account by a contemporary witness is Thomas Ford, A History of Illinois (Chicago, 1854); George R. Gayler's "A Social, Economic, and Political Study of the Mormons in Western Illinois, 1839-1846: A Re-evaluation" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1955), contributes little to previous scholarship. Still valuable is Brigham H. Roberts, The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo (Salt Lake City, 1900).

turned Nauvoo into a virtual city-state. The city council had authority to enact any kind of ordinance "not repugnant to the Constitution of the United States or of this state." A municipal court under the jurisdiction of the mayor was empowered to grant writs of habeas corpus "so widely as to enable Mormons to escape trial under gentile jurisdiction." A municipal militia, the Nauvoo Legion, was separate from the state militia, subject only to the authority of the governor. As a lieutenant general, Joseph Smith became the commanding officer.¹⁵

The celebration of the eleventh anniversary of the organization of the church, on April 6, 1841, gave Smith and his followers an opportunity for an impressive display of their newly won temporal power. The culmination of the day's events was a full-dress review of the Nauvoo Legion by Smith, resplendent in his general's uniform. The Kingdom of God, it seemed, was at last becoming a reality. As Nauvoo grew, so did the enthusiasm of the

¹⁵History of the Church, VI, 239-245.

Saints. An article in the Millennial Star, published a year later, entertained sanguine hopes for the mission of the Legion. The time would come, hoped the editor, when the Legion would be strong enough "to rescue the American Republic from the brink of ruin."¹⁶

Understandably, Gentiles viewed the Legion with considerable suspicion. The extravagant hopes entertained by the Saints for the future of Nauvoo also increased the apprehensions of non-Mormons. According to the Millennial Star, Nauvoo was

. . . the nucleus of a glorious dominion of universal liberty, peace and plenty; it is an organization of that government of which there shall be no end--of that kingdom of Messiah which shall roll forth, from conquering and to conquer until it shall be said, that "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ," "AND THE SAINTS OF THE MOST HIGH SHALL POSSESS THE GREATNESS OF THE KINGDOM UNDER THE WHOLE HEAVEN."¹⁷

In Nauvoo, the Mormon Prophet was riding the crest of power. The apostate John C. Bennett, who took every chance

¹⁶Millennial Star, III (1842), 69.

¹⁷ibid.

to blacken the reputation of Smith and embarrass him publicly, charged that the Prophet had dreamt of making Nauvoo the base of operations for a Mormon empire that was at first to include Missouri, Illinois, and the Territory of Iowa. "The remaining states were to be licked up like salt, and fall into the immense labyrinth of glorious prophetic dominion, like the defenceless lamb before the mighty king of the forest!"¹⁸ Bennett greatly distorted the aims of the Mormons. Smith had made it emphatically clear that "it will not be by the sword or gun that this kingdom will roll on."¹⁹ But the Prophet's dreams of empire were nevertheless true. On March 1, 1844, there appeared in the Nauvoo Times and Seasons the so-called Great Acrostic: "Joseph The Great Prophet of the Western Empire of States." The Gentiles could not quite comprehend how such an empire could be established without violence. In that same year Thomas Gregg, editor of the Warsaw Message, had written of Joseph Smith as "that hoary monster who rules at Nauvoo; whose black heart would exult

¹⁸John C. Bennett, The History of the Saints (Boston, 1842), p. 293.

¹⁹History of the Church, VI, 365.

in carnage and bloodshed, rather than yield one iota of what power he has obtained by his hellish knavery."²⁰ Gregg's editorials became increasingly vitriolic. For example, he warned Smith: "We claim not to be a prophet nor the son of a prophet, yet we tell you that your career of infamy cannot continue but a little longer! Your days are numbered!"²¹

Smith knew that such threats would sooner or later come true. He also knew that if Gregg and those of his ilk would learn of the projected future of the Kingdom of God, the situation of the Mormons in Nauvoo would be even worse. As long as the Saints were forced to live among the Gentiles the Prophet felt he could not confide his innermost dreams even to his followers. "Brother Brigham," he once remarked to Young at Kirtland, "if I were to reveal to this people what the Lord has revealed to me, there is not a man or a woman that would stay with me."²² What,

²⁰Quoted in Fawn M. Brodie, No Man Knows My History. The Life of Joseph Smith (New York, 1945), pp. 357-58.

²¹Ibid., p. 358.

²²Journal of Discourses, IX (1863), 294.

then, could he expect if the Gentiles got wind of such doctrines?

The revelation outlining the organization of the political Kingdom of God represented, therefore, an inherently explosive situation. The Prophet had first written it down on April 7, 1842. When he finally did organize the government of that kingdom in 1844, he knew that the time would come when the Saints would have to leave Nauvoo.²³ Activities of such magnitude simply could not be kept secret for very long.

Another compelling reason for removing the Saints from Gentile contact was the increasing difficulty the Prophet faced in hiding and denying some rather unorthodox marriage practices which, it was whispered in Nauvoo, he and some of his intimate followers had engaged in. Rumors that Smith and some of his associates were practicing polygamy can be traced back as far as the Kirtland period. Significantly, in August, 1835, the Church made the first of a number of pronouncements denying the charges of

²³Minutes of the Council of Fifty, 1890 (MS, Brigham Young University Library).

polygamy.²⁴ One Mormon faction, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, denies to this day that Smith ever taught or practiced plural marriage.²⁵ This denial, however, is untenable in the face of overwhelming evidence. Fawn Brodie has shown quite conclusively that Smith had inaugurated plural marriage the very latest on the eve of the eleventh anniversary of the Church on April 5, 1841, when he married Louisa Beaman.²⁶ There is, moreover, considerable evidence that the Prophet had taken several wives even before that date.²⁷

²⁴History of the Church, II, 247: "Inasmuch as this Church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication and polygamy, we declare that we believe that one man should have one wife, and one woman but one husband except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again."

²⁵see statement by Joseph Smith III, son of the Mormon prophet, who became head of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, in his autobiography, as quoted in Edward W. Tullidge, Life of Joseph the Prophet (rev. ed., Plano, Ill., 1880), pp. 798-800; see also Inez Smith Davis, The Story of the Church (4th ed. rev.; Independence, Mo., 1948), pp. 486-490.

²⁶Brodie p. 301.

²⁷Brodie gathered evidence showing that Smith may have had as many as forty-eight plural wives. See ibid., 434-465.

In Nauvoo Smith also began to initiate some of his close and trusted associates into the practice. Among these people the initial shock was considerable. Brigham Young later confessed that "it was the first time in my life that I desired the grave, and I could hardly get over it for a long time."²⁸ Smith himself claimed that he instituted the practice only after God had repeatedly commanded him to do so. According to Eliza R. Snow, one of the most renowned of his numerous wives, and an individual destined to become one of the leading women in Mormon culture after his death, the Prophet hesitated to carry out the fateful commandment "until an angel of God stood by him with a drawn sword, and told him that, unless he moved forward and established plural marriage, his priesthood would be taken from him and he should be destroyed."²⁹

Smith realized that polygamy could tear Mormonism asunder. Privately he insisted that "it eventually would prove the overthrow of the church and we should be obliged

²⁸Quoted in William Alexander Linn, The Story of the Mormons (New York, 1902), p. 280.

²⁹Eliza R. Snow, Biography of Lorenzo Snow (Salt Lake City, 1884), p. 70.

to leave the United States, unless it could be speedily put down."³⁰ Consequently he publicly denied and condemned the practice until his death. He was intelligent enough to foresee the consequences should he openly admit the existence of polygamy, given the climate of opinion in Illinois.³¹

Plural marriage was part of the social order of the political Kingdom of God. It is reasonable to assume that Smith believed it the wisest policy to defer the public announcement of polygamy until the establishment of the Kingdom on firmer ground than in Nauvoo. There may have been a reason that the official though secret revelation for the establishment of polygamy was given more than a year after the revelation enjoining Smith to organize the political Kingdom of God.³² There was an important

³⁰Quoted in True Latter Day Saints Herald, I (1860), 22-23.

³¹For Smith's public condemnations of polygamy, see Time and Seasons, III (1842), 709-710; V (1844), 423.

³²The revelation concerning plural marriages was recorded on July 12, 1843. See Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132. The revelation concerning the political Kingdom of God was given on April 7, 1842. See Minutes of the Council of Fifty, 1880.

interrelationship between the institution of polygamy and the political Kingdom of God. The latter, of course, was not directly dependent of the former, but polygamy could only be practiced in ethical and moral terms within the Kingdom. It was, therefore, no accident that Brigham Young deferred the public announcement of polygamy until he had established a quasi-independent kingdom of God in the Rocky Mountains.³³

Polygamy was also to have a direct effect on the fortunes of the political Kingdom. It could serve as a rallying point and symbol of identification for a people who, in spite of all the special qualities of their faith, were basically New Englanders, and as such not too different from their fellow Americans. More than anything else, polygamy could stamp these folk as a "peculiar people" and thus aid them in establishing a national identity for the Kingdom of God. Many opponents of Mormonism realized this fact only too well and conducted the anti-polygamy crusade not just to eradicate this practice

³³polygamy was officially announced by the Church on August 29, 1852 in a missionary conference, and published in a special edition of the Deseret News, September 14, 1852.

but more importantly as a way of destroying the political Kingdom of God.³⁴

The idea of a political Kingdom of God can be traced back to the Kirtland period of the Church. But the idea of a special, secret governing body for this Kingdom, separate from the Mormon hierarchy, apparently was not conceived by Smith until he established his temporal kingdom on relatively firm foundations (at least so he had hoped) in Nauvoo. John C. Bennett, that brilliant charlatan who had insinuated himself into the confidence of the Prophet in Nauvoo and became his chief lieutenant, claimed after his defection from Mormonism that in a revelation dated April 7, 1841, Smith had commissioned him to organize a para-monarchical organization called the Order of the Illuminati after the Prophet's death as a means of perpetuating the Kingdom of God.³⁵ It is quite unlikely that Bennett was telling the truth. Yet, although the Order of the Illuminati established by Bennett after Smith's death

³⁴see below, pp. 297-300.

³⁵Milo M. Quaife, The Kingdom of Saint James (New Haven, 1935), pp. 49-50.

In James Strang's schismatic Mormon Kingdom of God on Beaver Island in Lake Michigan was largely born of Bennett's own vivid imagination, the connection to a revelation by Smith is not improbable. That revelation was dated just one day after the impressive celebration of the eleventh anniversary of the Church on April 6, 1841.³⁶

Bennett's secret order bore some remarkable similarities to certain Masonic rituals and practices. This was also true of Smith's Council of Fifty. In its early period, Mormonism was strongly anti-masonic; the Book of Mormon condemned secret societies and combinations in the strongest terms.³⁷ But John C. Bennett was able to convince Smith that a masonic lodge in Nauvoo might be a considerable asset to the Saints. Bennett, himself a master mason, obtained a dispensation for a lodge in Nauvoo. On March 15, 1842, the Grand Master of Illinois, Abraham Jonas, installed the lodge. Most of the leading Mormons joined the organization. Smith himself was initiated as

³⁶ibid.

³⁷Ether, 8:18-26; Helaman, 6:18-30.

a master mason on the following day, March 16. Many other members of the hierarchy, likewise, advanced within the craft at a rate that seemed quite irregular to members of the non-Mormon lodges in Illinois. As a result, friction between Mormons and Gentiles increased, contrary to Smith's expectations.³⁸

The Nauvoo Lodge proved to be a powerful instrument in the hands of Smith for the consolidation of his own power. A secret oath bound society could serve as an effective mechanism to enforce solidarity and discipline, and could be useful in keeping the secrets of polygamy

³⁸ James C. Bilderback, "Masonry and Mormonism, Nauvoo, Illinois, 1841-1847" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1937). There are striking similarities between Masonic rituals and those performed in Mormon temples. The first temple in which these ceremonies were conducted was built in Nauvoo. Mormon apologists claim that any similarities between Masonic rituals and the temple ceremony can be explained by the fact that Freemasonry is a historical distortion of an ancient order revealed by God Himself to the ancient patriarchs. God presumably revealed these truths to Joseph Smith; hence a certain resemblance between Mormon and Masonic rituals was inevitable. See Anthony Woodward Ivins, The Relationship of "Mormonism" and Freemasonry (Salt Lake City, 1934); E. Cecil McGavin, Mormonism and Masonry (4th ed.; Salt Lake City, 1956).

contained within a group of men Smith felt he could trust. It is not mere coincidence that some of the most prominent members of the Nauvoo Lodge also were some of the first to be initiated into the practice of polygamy. Thus, William Clayton, personal secretary of the Prophet and one of the first polygamists, became secretary of the Nauvoo Lodge. Later, in 1844, he became secretary of the Council of Fifty.³⁹

Whether or not there existed any direct connection between the government of the Kingdom of God and Freemasonry cannot be determined. But it is significant that the Nauvoo Lodge was installed three weeks before Smith received his revelation regarding the political Kingdom of God. The oaths of secrecy administered in the Nauvoo Lodge in 1842 could serve as a means of preparation and of testing to determine to whom the Prophet could trust the more important and more potentially dangerous secrets revealed to the Council of Fifty in 1844. It is, therefore, more than coincidence that the majority of the original members of the Council of Fifty in 1844 belonged to the

³⁹History of the Church, VI, 261, 263.

Nauvoo Lodge.⁴⁰ Whether or not this relationship between Freemasonry and the Council of Fifty had any influence on the secret rituals practiced by the members of the government of the Kingdom of God is again only a moot question. But members of the Council of Fifty, like the Freemasons, donned special robes in their private ceremonies, and "offerred up" secret signs.⁴¹

Smith hesitated to publicize the explosive doctrine of polygamy; it is understandable that he drew back even more in openly proclaiming the political Kingdom of God; in fact, he even was indecisive about establishing it. At worst, polygamy was a highly unorthodox and detestable moral and social practice to the Gentiles. The secret meetings

⁴⁰Some other prominent Freemasons initiated into the Council of Fifty were Herber C. Kimball, George Miller, Hyrum Smith, John Smith, Newel K. Whitney, and Brigham Young. Unfortunately, a complete list of members of the Nauvoo Lodge is not extant. It would be interesting to learn the names of the fifty prominent Mormon Freemasons who attended the laying of the cornerstone of the Masonic Temple at Nauvoo on June 24, 1843, and who signed a document deposited in the cornerstone.

⁴¹William Clayton, William Clayton's Journal (Salt Lake City, 1921), pp. 40, 202; Journal of Amasa Lyman (typed MS, Brigham Young University Library), p. 37.

and activities of the Council of Fifty, especially if misinterpreted by the Gentiles, might well have made Smith vulnerable to the charge of treason. As a result, the Prophet moved with extreme caution. Even a two-year testing period was by no means too long to determine whom he could trust. It had taken the Prophet that long to decide that he "wished Bennett was in hell!"⁴² To come to that conclusion about a man initiated into the Council of Fifty might well prove fatal not only to the Council but to the Church as well.

Although the Bennett episode revealed Smith as a man who trusted his fellow men somewhat naively, it also taught him a lesson. The apprenticeship of the Prophet's most trusted associates whom he initiated into the Council of Fifty lasted considerably longer than two years. As already indicated, one of the earliest testing grounds for loyalty was Zion's Camp. Another was the Mormon counties in Missouri during the persecutions of 1838-39.

⁴²Sangamon Journal, July 29, 1842.

By the summer of 1838, rumors began to circulate in the town of Far West, the new Mormon gathering place in Missouri, about a secret society variously called the Daughters of Zion, the Destroying Angels, the sons of Dan, and the Danites. It soon became apparent that there was considerable truth to the rumors. Sampson Avard, with the connivance and encouragement of Sidney Rigdon, had organized a secret military organization bound together by oaths and secret passwords. According to John D. Lee, who was to become a prominent member of the Council of Fifty, "the members of this order were placed under the most sacred obligations that language could invent. They were sworn to stand by and sustain each other; sustain, protect, defend, and obey the leaders of the church under any and all circumstances unto death."⁴³ Ostensibly, Avard had organized the band in self-defense against the depredations of the Missourians. But his real intentions went farther, and must be identified with Smith's ambitions to establish the political Kingdom of God. Although Smith repudiated Avard's excessive zeal and excommunicated him from the Church, there can be no question

⁴³As quoted in M. W. Montgomery, The Mormon Delusion (Minneapolis, 1890), p. 44.

that the germ for Avar'd's ideas must be sought in ideas that originated with the Prophet himself. In his personal history, Smith recorded an account of Avar'd's address to his captains:

Know ye not, brethren, that it soon will be your privilege to take your respective companies and go out on a scout on the borders of the settlements, and take to yourselves spoils of the goods of the ungodly Gentiles? For it is written, the riches of the Gentiles shall be consecrated to my people, the house of Israel; and thus you will waste away the Gentiles by robbing and plundering them of their property; and in this way we will build up the kingdom of God, and roll forth the little stone that Daniel saw cut out of the mountain without hands, and roll forth until it filled the whole earth. For this is the very way that God destines to build up His kingdom in the last days.⁴⁴

The Prophet may have repudiated Avar'd's lust for plunder and vengeance, but many of the men attracted to Avar'd's service could be even more useful in establishing the legitimate Kingdom of God. Proven loyalty in one secret organization could be advantageous in another. As a result, several important Danites were among those initiated into

⁴⁴ History of the Church, III, 180.

the Council of Fifty in 1844.⁴⁵ In fact, the aura of secrecy surrounding the Council, and the method of enforcing it, thus had a precedent going beyond the somewhat symbolic significance of the masonic oaths and rituals. But although Smith had initiated several Danites into the Council of Fifty, there is no evidence that the latter was in any sense a continuation of the Danite organization. Rumors circulating in Nauvoo during 1844 that Smith had revived the Danite band cannot be substantiated and are most likely a result of the suspected purposes and activities attributed to the Council of Fifty by the uninitiated.⁴⁶

This veil of secrecy makes it difficult to obtain not only full information on the Council of Fifty itself, but also on the events and circumstances leading up to its organization. It is clear, however, that Smith did not limit the preparation of the future members of his council to the performance of masonic rituals. In a number of special council meetings between 1842 and 1844, recorded in the History of the Church in a rather cryptic fashion, the Prophet and some

⁴⁵John D. Lee, Orrin Porter Rockwell, Lyman Wight.

⁴⁶Ford, History of Illinois, p. 322.

of his close associates conducted business that was apparently other than ecclesiastical.⁴⁷ Of special interest is a council held by Smith on September 26, 1843 in a conference room above his store in Nauvoo. The reasons for calling the council and the nature of its deliberations remain obscure. After listing the names of those attending, Smith simply remarks that "by the common consent and the unanimous voice of the council, I was chosen president of the special council."⁴⁸ Others present were John M. Bernhisel, Amasa Lyman, George Miller, Willard Richards, Smith's brother Hyrum, his uncle John Smith, John Taylor, Newel K. Whitney, and Lucien Woodworth. When the council met again in the evening, William Law and William Marks also attended. What makes the council interesting is that of all those present, only one, William Law, did not become a member of the Council of Fifty in 1844, most likely because he had by then defected from the Church.⁴⁹ It is also significant that most of those present would take a

⁴⁷History of the Church, IV, 500; VI, 39, 45.

⁴⁸Ibid., VI, 39.

⁴⁹Ibid.

prominent part in the activities of the Council of Fifty in 1844.

Though it cannot be documented fully, it is quite probable that this particular council was to deliberate on the political future of the Church, especially in view of the impending 1844 national elections. On October 1, 1843, three days after this council first met, the Times and Seasons came out with an editorial under the title, "Who shall be our next President?"⁵⁰ The Council of Fifty decided in favor of the Mormon Prophet in 1844.

The council may also have been convened to commission Elder George J. Adams for a special mission to Russia, of which the Times and Seasons informed its readers under the same date. As the newspaper pointed out, this assignment was to be more than an ordinary church mission. To it were "attached some of the most important things concerning the advancement and building up of the kingdom of God in the last days, which cannot be explained at this time."⁵¹ If

⁵⁰Quoted in ibid., pp. 39-41.

⁵¹ibid., p. 41.

Adams had been sent on a routine church mission, it is doubtful that Smith would have been constrained to give such an explanation. Hundreds of Mormon missionaries were travelling throughout the world to preach the Mormon gospel to "every kindred, tongue, and nation." This was common knowledge both to the Saints and to the Gentiles. It is most likely that Adams's mission was in behalf of the political Kingdom of God, rather than the Church, with the intention of sounding out Russia's attitude regarding an independent Mormon state, which the Council of Fifty would attempt to establish half a year later. At that time, the Council would send quasi-diplomatic representatives to other nations. But the trip to Russia would be considerably more expensive, longer, and fraught with much more uncertainty. Timely preparation would be of the essence.

Another fact that makes this document noteworthy is that since the commission to Adams was issued by the First Presidency of the Church, it should have been signed not only by Joseph and Hyrum Smith, but also by Sidney Rigdon and William Law. Yet the signatures of the latter two are not present on the document. This omission is especially

significant because neither Rigdon nor Law became members of the Council of Fifty. Is it possible that Smith was already separating the functions of the Church and of the Kingdom, and, having lost some confidence in Rigdon and Law, was unwilling to initiate them into matters regarding the political Kingdom of God requiring the utmost secrecy and discretion? In the absence of further evidence, this supposition seems the most logical one.⁵²

When, on March 11, 1844, Smith organized the Council of Fifty in the lodge room over Henry Miller's house, he had the reasonable assurance that the men he convened for that purpose would not be terribly startled by the doctrines he was about to propound. By that time they were used to learning startling things from their prophet; they had also become acquainted, in part at least, with many of the ideas to be promulgated in the secret sessions of this body. The Prophet, moreover, had reason to believe that he could expect unswerving loyalty from these men since he had moved

⁵² Editor B. H. Roberts made it a special point to note the failure of Law and Rigdon to sign the letter; ibid.

cautiously and selected them slowly and judiciously.⁵³

The name of the Council was given by revelation in 1842: "The Kingdom of God and His Laws with the keys and powers thereof and judgment in the hands of his servants."⁵⁴ The authenticity of this document was corroborated by John D. Lee, who recorded the name of the Council as "The Kingdom of God and its Laws and Justice and Judgment in my hands."⁵⁵ This genuine though somewhat lengthy name was considered to be ineffable, except on special occasions in council meetings.⁵⁶ Initially Smith himself merely called it a "special council." Later he preferred the name "general council." Other designations identifying the group were "Council of the Kingdom," "Council of the Gods," and "Living Constitution." But the most popular and most frequently used designation of this organization was simply "Council

⁵³ibid., pp. 260-61, 263-64, 267.

⁵⁴minutes of the Council of Fifty, 1880.

⁵⁵John D. Lee, A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee, 1848-1876, ed. Robert Glass Cleland and Juanita Brooks (San Marino, Cal., 1955), I, 98.

⁵⁶ibid.

of Fifty." This appellation had its origin in the approximate number of men comprising the body.⁵⁷

The organization, according to charter member Benjamin F. Johnson, consisted of "a select circle of the prophet's most trusted friends, including the twelve [apostles] but not all the constituted authorities of the Church."⁵⁸ Smith failed, as noted above, to initiate Sidney Rigdon and William Law as Council members. The quorum of the Twelve Apostles also served as ex-officio members of the Council of Fifty as long as the Council existed. Joseph Smith established the precedent that the president of the Church should also be the president of the Council of Fifty, a custom followed both by Brigham Young and John Taylor. That the president of the Church also served as the first officer in the political Kingdom of God was in complete harmony with the theocratic theory of the

⁵⁷ Lee, Mormon Chronicle, I, 97, 98, 104; Lee, Mormonism Unveiled (St. Louis, Mo., 1877), p. 173; Millennial Star, XXV (1863), 136; Ibid., XXVI (1864), 328; George Miller A Mormon Bishop and His Son, . . . , ed. H. M. Mills (London, England; n.d.), p. 49.

⁵⁸ Johnson to Gibbs, p. 9.

Kingdom. Ultimately, Christ was to be the supreme ruler in both the Church and the political Kingdom of God.

The concepts of individual rights and separation of church and state required the presence of non-Mormons in the government of the Kingdom. Although available membership lists do not reveal any Gentiles among the group, Brigham Young and John D. Lee insisted that these requirements were realized.⁵⁹ Such assertions may be based on the fact that Colonel Thomas L. Kane, whose unselfish services in behalf of the Mormons are a matter of record, may have been initiated into the secrets of the Council. Whatever Kane's formal relationship to the group, he actively participated in Council of Fifty deliberations during the Mormon exodus at Winter Quarters, Iowa.⁶⁰ Still another Gentile who was probably a member of the Council was Daniel H. Wells. As Justice of the Peace in Nauvoo, Wells actively

⁵⁹Lee, in Mormonism Unveiled, p. 173, mentioned a man named Jackson, whose identity cannot be determined. See also Millennial Star, XXVI (1864), 328.

⁶⁰"Diaries and Official Records of John D. Lee" (typed MS at Brigham Young University Library), pp. 166-168.

aided the Mormon cause. He served as intermediary between the Mormons and the Illinois state government. He also held a commission as Brevet Brigadier General in the Nauvoo Legion. During the expulsion of the Mormons from Nauvoo the Saints bestowed upon him the title "Defender of Nauvoo" in recognition of his steadfast and fearless support of their cause. In 1846 he joined the Mormons on their trek to the Great Basin and was baptized into the faith in Iowa. It is quite probable that Wells, whose actions in Nauvoo reveal him as a Mormon in all but name, may have forgone baptism temporarily in order to maintain the fiction of the theory of the political Kingdom of God, and for the more practical reason of presenting to the world the image of a Gentile sympathetic to the Mormon cause. The Saints would later consider membership of non-Mormons in the Council of Fifty to be a benevolent concession to the Gentile world. In 1844, however, with the Mormon-Gentile ratio of Mormon to Gentile hardly reflective of the anticipated future strength of Mormonism, membership of a Gentile in the Council of Fifty while hardly advantageous to non-Mormons, may have

been of some benefit to the persecuted Saints.⁶¹

Despite the concept of the separation of church and state for the government of the Kingdom of God, ecclesiastical rank was nevertheless a powerful source of prestige in the council. The Twelve Apostles, for example, had special responsibilities in the Church and also in the political Kingdom of God. Benjamin F. Johnson recalled in 1903 one of the last sermons Smith gave before the group:

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 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."⁶²

⁶¹Millennial Star, XXIII (1861), 423; History of the Church, VII, 614.

⁶²Johnson to Gibbs, p. 10.

According to Wilford Woodruff, this so-called "last charge" of the Prophet represented the climax of several months of intensive instruction to the council:

It was not merely a few hours ministering to them the ordinances of the Gospel; but he spent day after day, week after week and month after month, teaching . . . the things of the Kingdom of God. Said he, during that period, "I now rejoice. I have lived until I have seen this burden, which has rested on my shoulders, rolled on to the shoulders of other men; now the keys of the kingdom are planted on the earth to be taken away no more for ever."⁶³

What Smith taught in these meetings is largely a matter of conjecture because the deliberations and actions of the Council of Fifty were then and remain still for the most part of a secret nature. Even half a century after these original meetings had taken place, Patriarch Benjamin F. Johnson, who was present at every session of the Council in the Nauvoo period, did not feel free to divulge the private teachings imparted to the Council by the Prophet in 1844. Johnson made it clear that secrecy was a protective measure undertaken to avoid the possibility of misunderstanding by

⁶³ Journal of Discourses, XII (1869), 164.

both the Gentiles and the Saints. Only after attending the Council of Fifty, Johnson affirmed, did he and his associates begin "in a degree to understand the meaning of what he [Joseph Smith] had so often publicly said, that should he teach and practice the principles that the Lord had revealed to him, and now requested of him, that those then nearest to him in the stand would become his enemies and the first to seek his life."⁶⁴

According to John D. Lee, the Council also considered guarding the confidential nature of its administrative and governmental activities of vital importance. He told of a council meeting in the early Utah period which concerned itself almost exclusively with impressing upon members the importance of guarding council secrets. Brigham Young, investigating certain public breaches of confidential council matters, lectured his cohorts severely:

Members of this council should be men of [such] firmness and integrity, that when they leave this council Room that the things that belong to this council should be as safe as

⁶⁴Johnson to Gibbs, p. 9.

though it was locked up on the silent vaults of Eternity but such things must be overcome or the men who indulge in them will be dropped from this council.⁶⁵

The fear of such consequences is illustrated by the reaction of John Pack, one of the offenders. He "pled for Forgiveness, Said try me a little longer. Then, if I don't prove true, deal with me as you think proper, if it is to cut my head off, & wept bitterly like a child. His request was granted."⁶⁶

Secrecy at times went so far that papers accumulated during a meeting were burned at the close of the session.⁶⁷ In what appears as a rather crude attempt to protect the identity of the organization, John D. Lee spelled its name backwards as YTFIF in his diary entries. The first clerk of the Council of Fifty, William Clayton, also tried to veil references to it in his diary by calling it "K. of G."⁶⁸ Rumors of the secret organization were responsible for

⁶⁵Lee, Mormon Chronicle, I, 104.

⁶⁶ibid.

⁶⁷Lee, Mormonism Unveiled, p. 173.

⁶⁸Clayton, pp. 74, 202.

linking the Council with the Danites and for charges of crimes and atrocities allegedly committed by the organization. There is no known evidence to support such accusations.

The haunting question still arises as to how the Mormons could reconcile strong denunciations of secret organizations in the Book of Mormon with the existence of the highly secret Council of Fifty. In the thinking of Council leaders, this seeming contradiction was most likely resolved as follows: Unlike the secret combinations mentioned in the Book of Mormon, and unlike Freemasonry, the Council of Fifty held secrecy to be a merely temporary expedient because the world at large and certain church members in particular had not yet progressed to the degree where they could accept without protest all the doctrines of Mormonism. Brigham Young once indicated that certain doctrines regarding the Kingdom of God were not to be revealed before church members were willing and able to keep them secret. In a revelation in Doctrine and Covenants, Smith warned his followers to "keep these things from going abroad unto the world until it is expedient in me that ye may accomplish this work in the eyes of the people, and in

the eyes of your enemies, that they may not know your works until ye have accomplished the thing which I have commanded you."⁶⁹ Ultimately, therefore, the whole world would be aware of the existence of the Council of Fifty. In fact, it is difficult to see how it could have been otherwise, since world government was to be one of the Council's primary missions.

What, then, were the doctrines discussed and acted upon in the Council of Fifty that its leaders considered to be too advanced for the world and even the members of the Church? Although much of this information is still not available to scholars, council members occasionally set down some of the purposes and functions of the organization in their private diaries and journals.

That the Council of Fifty was to be the government of the political Kingdom of God was made clear by John D. Lee:

This council aluded to is the Municipal department of the Kingdom of God set up on the

⁶⁹ Doctrine and Covenants, 45:72.

Earth, from which all law emanates, for the rule, government & controle of all Nations Kingdoms & touns and People under the whole Heavens but not to controle the Priesthood but to council, deliberate & plan for the general good & upbuilding of the Kingdom of God on the earth.⁷⁰

This function of the council is also suggested by its name, "the Kingdom of God and His Laws with the keys and powers thereof and judgment in the hands of his servants," and by an excerpt regarding the Council of Fifty from a revelation: "Ye are my Constitution and I am your God and ye are my Spokesmen."⁷¹ The language of these passages suggests that the governmental powers and duties of the council were to be executive, legislative, and judicial. This interpretation in fact corresponds with the actual exercise of political power by the Council extending into all three branches of government. However, there is a paucity of information as to how these powers were to be divided among the members. It is known that the president of the Church also served as president of the Council. As such he was

⁷⁰ Lee, Mormon Chronicle, I, 80.

⁷¹ Minutes of the Council of Fifty, 1880.

presumably head of state of the political Kingdom of God, at least until Christ would assume that position.

The scriptures indicated that Christ would rule as king over the Kingdom of God. Smith took this idea quite literally and thought it only logical that he, as predecessor of the Savior, should enjoy all the prerogatives of royalty. Consequently, shortly before his death, the Prophet had himself ordained as "King on earth."⁷² Brigham Young, upon his arrival in the Great Basin, likewise had this ceremony performed on him in the Council of Fifty.⁷³ If this "coronation" is interpreted literally, it is in direct violation of the Book of Mormon, which emphatically predicted that no kings were to rule America in the period

⁷² George Miller to unidentified correspondent, June, 1855, in the John Zahnd MS (Mormon Papers, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library), pp. 17-18.

⁷³ Former Bishop Andrew Cahoon, whose father Reynolds Cahoon had been a member of the Council of Fifty, testified in 1889: "The King of that Kingdom that was set up on the earth was the head of the Church. Brigham Young proclaimed himself King here in Salt Lake Valley before there was a house built, in 1847." Quoted in Reginald W. Kauffman and Ruth H. Kauffman, The Latter Day Saints: A Study of the Mormons in the Light of Economic Conditions (London, 1912), p. 83.

of the restoration of the Gospel.⁷⁴ But it is quite likely that the ceremony had an essentially symbolic significance. This view is supported by the fact that the vocabulary of royalty, in the nineteenth century, was in great vogue as a mere "fossilized figure of speech" among Americans in general, who could certainly not be accused of favoring monarchy. Two centuries earlier, even as eloquent a writer as John Milton had not been able to find adequate substitutes for the "royal fossils" although he despised kings and helped one lose his head.⁷⁵

The title of king may have been a metaphor, but not the power deriving from the office. In this respect it is especially important to recall that Smith held his political office by divine right and not by popular sovereignty. However metaphorical these royal pretensions may have been, Smith knew that they were so potentially dangerous as to be entrusted only to the initiated. The same was true of certain of "His Laws" which the Council of Fifty was enjoined

⁷⁴2 Nephi, 10:11.

⁷⁵Charles Duffy, "The Vocabulary of Royalty: Fossilized Figures of Speech," The Western Humanities Review, V (1950), 118-19.

to administer. The idea that the law of the Kingdom of God was to be separate from the laws of the world had been introduced as early as 1831 at the time when the Saints were commanded to gather in Ohio: ". . . there I will give unto you my law; and there you shall be endowed with power from on high."⁷⁶ Three years later, after the unsuccessful expedition of Zion's Camp, the Prophet received a revelation to counteract the discouragement resulting from the failure to "take the Kingdom." The Saints were given the assurance that eventually, the kingdoms of the world would be "constrained to acknowledge that the kingdom of Zion is in very deed the kingdom of our God and his Christ; therefore, let us become subject unto her laws."⁷⁷

These laws were to be both spiritual and temporal. They comprised the ecclesiastical laws to be administered by the Church, and the temporal, political laws, to be administered by the Council of Fifty. The discussions on political theory in that organization leave no doubt that the temporal laws of

⁷⁶ Doctrine and Covenants, 38:32.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 105:32.

the Kingdom of God were to be based on a modified version of the Constitution of the United States.⁷⁸

Unfortunately, the constitution of the Kingdom of God is not available to scholars. By examining the constitution of the State of Deseret, which was as complete an embodiment of the political theories of the political Kingdom of God as the Council of Fifty ever achieved, some inferences regarding the nature of this document can be made. Indeed, the constitution of Deseret deviates very little from most western state constitutions, or that of the United States. One of its most striking features was an explicit guarantee of religious freedom in its Bill of Rights; another was that office holders served without remuneration. As will be demonstrated in the case of Deseret, the constitution was at times little more than a piece of paper that could conveniently be disregarded by the Council of Fifty if circumstances required.⁷⁹

⁷⁸History of the Church, VI, 57.

⁷⁹See below, p. 229.

The Council, however, did not have a cynical attitude towards the law. Rather, it believed that circumstances might arise requiring the substitution of a higher law for the existing temporal one. The Council of Fifty was the "highest court on earth."⁸⁰ As such, it considered itself superior to any codifications of the law, even that of a constitution. Claiming to be guided by divine revelation, the Council was in theory the expression of a fundamental law, as illustrated in the revelation authorizing its organization: "Ye are my Constitution."⁸¹ Accordingly, the Council was occasionally referred to as the "Living Constitution."⁸² This was in keeping with Joseph Smith's belief that man-made law could not "meet every case, or attain the ends of justice in all respects."⁸³ The Council of Fifty, therefore, set an important precedent, according to which

⁸⁰James Holt, "The Reminiscences of James Holt. A Narrative of the Emmett Company," ed. Dale Morgan, Utah Historical Quarterly, XXV (1957), 107.

⁸¹Minutes of the Council of Fifty, 1890.

⁸²Lee, Mormonism Unveiled, p. 173.

⁸³Ibid.

justice, in the Kingdom of God, was administered in regard to the merits of each case.⁸⁴

As administered by the Council of Fifty, the law itself comprised the entire criminal and civil code. Yet certain of the laws purportedly based of this constitution seemed in closer harmony with the Pentateuch, such as polygamy. This was precisely one of the important reasons why the Council of Fifty was charged with administering "My Laws." As long as the Saints were subject to the civil and criminal codes of the Gentiles, polygamy would be illegal or at best extra-legal. This is one of the major reasons why the Mormons waited until 1852 to publicly announce the doctrine of polygamy, for by that time the laws of the political Kingdom of God, at least in a rudimentary fashion, had been established in the Great Basin Kingdom.⁸⁵

⁸⁴Mormons regarded lawyers with great suspicion. None of the judicial officers of the State of Deseret, for instance, had any legal training. This was considered to be an advantage rather than an encumbrance. See Dale Morgan, "The State of Deseret," Utah Historical Quarterly, VIII (1940), 87.

⁸⁵See extra edition of Deseret News, September 14, 1852.

The law of blood atonement was still another law revealed from heaven but difficult to enforce even in the Kingdom of God. According to this doctrine a member of the Kingdom of God, if he committed the crimes of murder and adultery, or if he betrayed one of his fellow Mormons to the enemies of the Church, or revealed the secrets of the Kingdom, could save his soul only if he expiated for the crime by the shedding of his blood.⁸⁶ Blood atonement was of course a form of capital punishment. Yet because of its theological implications, and because the Council of Fifty was to administer it, the doctrine was surrounded with an aura of mystery, terror, and holy murder. The Council of Fifty heightened the atmosphere of fear and secrecy associated with this practice by conducting cases involving the possibility of blood atonement in utmost secrecy for fear of public repercussions. The strictures regarding secrecy noted above that Brigham Young had urged on fellow council members were in fact directly connected

⁸⁶See Charles W. Penrose, Blood Atonement as Taught by Leading Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City, 1884); Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage (Salt Lake City, 1905).

with a case of blood atonement;

The meeting having been called to order by the Press;, [he] arose & said that a member of the council had been guilty of divulging the secrets of this council & that John Pack was charged with it & related that Jackson Reding had been to H. C. Kimble, O. P. Rockwell, & others & told that John Pack had warned him to leave this place fourth with or he would not have the liberty,⁸⁷ intimating that his life was in danger. . . .

Whether or not the Council of Fifty ever pronounced the death penalty according to the principles of blood atonement cannot be ascertained. If Smith practiced it in Nauvoo, there is no record of this. Even in Utah the doctrine was theoretical, with the exception of a few attempts by the Council of Fifty to enforce it. In 1888, Apostle Charles W. Penrose wrote:

Because of the laws of the land and the prejudices of the nation, and the ignorance of the world, this law can not be carried out, but when the time comes that the law of God shall be in full force upon the earth, then this penalty will be inflicted for those crimes committed by persons under covenant not to commit them.⁸⁸

⁸⁷Lee, Mormon Chronicle, I, 103.

⁸⁸Penrose, Blood Atonement, p. 43.

However, shortly after the Mormons established the government of God in Utah on what they believed to be a permanent basis, they attempted to enforce the doctrine. Brigham Young insisted that there were "plenty of instances where men have been righteously slain in order to atone for their sins."⁸⁹

John D. Lee reported several deliberations of the Council of Fifty pertaining to blood atonement. On March 3, 1849, the Council discussed the cases of Ira West and Thomas Byres, whose offenses remain unknown. Their crimes were severe enough for Young alleged to have exclaimed: "I want their cursed heads to be cut off that they may atone for their sins, that mercy may have her claims upon them in the day of redemption."⁹⁰ On the following day, the Ira

⁸⁹Journal of Discourses, IV (1857), 219-20. Gustive O. Larson, in "The Mormon Reformation," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXVI (1958), 60-63, related "a verbally reported case" of a man found guilty of having committed adultery with his stepdaughter. "According to the report of the reputable eyewitnesses, judgment was executed with the consent of the offender who went to his unconsecrated grave in full confidence of salvation through the shedding of his blood."

⁹⁰Lee, Mormon Chronicle, I, 98.

West case was again discussed. All

. . . agreed that he had forfeited his Head, but the difficulty was how he should be disposed of. Some were of the opinion that to execute him Publicly, under the traditions of the People, would not be safe; but to dispose of him privately would be the most practicable, & would result in the greatest good. The People would know that he was gone, in some strange manner, & that would be all they could suggest, but fear would take hold of them & they would tremble for fear it would be their time next.⁹¹

In the end, neither Byres nor West were put to death, by blood atonement or other means.

The theories upon which such deliberations were based had all been revealed to the Council of Fifty by Joseph Smith in Illinois in 1844. It is obvious that they could be put into effect in Nauvoo only under the greatest secrecy and then only in a limited way. If the laws of God were to be implemented among the Saints, it was plain to Mormon leaders that the Kingdom of God would have to be removed from the world of the Gentiles. Planning the exodus from Nauvoo, therefore, was one of the first practical tasks devolving upon the Council of Fifty.

⁹¹Ibid., pp. 98-99.

CHAPTER IV

THE YEAR OF DECISION: THE COUNCIL OF FIFTY IN 1844

The year 1844 was one of the most turbulent and decisive in Mormon history. Had the Prophet survived that year, it might have been more peaceful, but it would have been hardly less crucial for the Saints. The Prophet had dreamed of establishing the political Kingdom of God in Nauvoo. Yet when after much hesitation he organized the Council of Fifty he already knew that an overt political Kingdom of God established in the state of Illinois would only intensify the persecutions of Mormons and might well lead to the destruction of all he had lived and worked to accomplish. The visions of grandeur and power which had quickened his imagination from the very beginning of his career simply could not be realized as long as he and his followers had to mingle with hostile Gentiles. By 1844, moreover, it had become all too apparent that Mormonism, by its very nature, would come into conflict with its surrounding society no matter how sincere.

the initial overtures of good behavior were on both sides. One anti-Mormon critic remarked that it was difficult to believe that all Gentiles, whether those in New York, Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, were black-hearted villains who had nothing else in mind than to exterminate Mormons. The religious, social and political beliefs of the Saints were simply incompatible with those of their neighbors.¹ A full-fledged political kingdom of God in Nauvoo, or anywhere else east of the Mississippi, would inevitably have meant the failure of Mormonism.

Smith was fully cognizant of this situation. Therefore, his decision to organize the Council of Fifty was a vital one, for with it he had made imperative a Mormon migration outside the territorial limits of the United States.

The Mormon prophet had already predicted the exodus of the Saints to the Rocky Mountains in 1842.² At the

¹ John H. Beadle, in William A. Hickman, Brigham's Destroying Angel, p. 15.

² History of the Church, V, 85-86.

time, however, he did not seem to have contemplated such a move seriously. The heady atmosphere of power and accomplishment that stirred the Mormons in Nauvoo was much to the Prophet's liking. "Excitement has almost become the essence of my life," he declared in 1843. "When that dies away, I feel almost lost. When a man is reined up continually by excitement, he becomes strong and gains power and knowledge."³ Still, another move for the Saints was not to be contemplated lightly. When the difficulties with the Gentiles in Illinois began to increase, Smith considered at first the alternatives to emigration.

One of the major complaints of the Mormons was their inability to obtain redress for grievances in the state courts. They felt very strongly that their constitutional rights, especially regarding freedom of religion, had been violated. When the courts of Missouri and the governor of the state ignored the Mormon pleas for justice, the Saints turned to Washington, where both congress and the president dismissed their petition for

³
Ibid., p. 389.

lack of jurisdiction. The problem was that the Saints wanted restitution of their property. As strong a nationalist as John Marshall, in Barron v. Baltimore, had made it quite clear that the fifth amendment was "intended solely as a limitation on the exercise of power by the government of the United States; and is not applicable to the legislation of the States."⁴

Smith had denounced President Martin Van Buren in the harshest terms for failing to give the Saints their due. But the Prophet was rapidly learning the intricacies of relations between the states and the federal government. The real culprit for the troubles besetting the Mormons was not Van Buren but the doctrine of states' rights. States' rights, Smith declared, "are what feed moles. They are a dead carcass--a stink, and they shall ascend up as a stink offering in the nose of the Almighty."⁵ The Prophet believed that the Mormons might escape the heavy hand of state government and possibly obtain

⁴VII Peters, p. 243.

⁵History of the Church, VI, 95.

sufficient freedom to establish the political Kingdom on firmer ground through a proposal he presented to Congress in December, 1843, under which Nauvoo was to gain recognition as a completely independent federal district.⁶ Congress understandably rejected the plan. Ironically, after the fourteenth amendment to the Constitution limited the powers of the states and increased those of the federal government, the Mormons jumped from the frying pan into the fire, as demonstrated by the strained relations of the Saints with the federal government in Utah.

By 1844 the Mormons had not received as much as a penny for their losses of property in Illinois, and their hopes of getting justice in the courts were as remote as ever. They felt, however, that they should exhaust all possibilities. Smith had received a revelation that instructed the Saints to

. . . importune at the feet of the judge;
 And if he heed them not, let them importune
 at the feet of the governor; And if the
 governor heed them not, let them importune
 at the feet of the president; And if the

⁶ Ibid., pp. 130-32.

president heed them not, then will the Lord arise and come forth out of his hiding place and in his fury vex the nation.⁷

According to Brigham Young , one of the first instructions Smith gave to the Council of Fifty was to take "the necessary steps to obtain redress for the wrongs which had been inflicted upon us by our persecutors."⁸ Following these instructions, a number of emissaries of the Council travelled to Washington "to present memorials to Congress, for redress of wrongs sustained by the Saints while in Missouri."⁹ Although individual members of Congress expressed sympathy for the plight of the Saints, they repeated Van Buren's argument that the matter was beyond federal jurisdiction. In the end, members of the Council of Fifty were as unsuccessful in their attempt to obtain justice for the Saints as were earlier emissaries.

Such experiences in Washington confirmed the Council of Fifty in its suspicions of democratic government. Orson Hyde observed that members of Congress, attempting to

⁷ Doctrine and Covenants, 101:86-89.

⁸ Millennial Star, XXVI (1864), 328.

⁹ Ibid., p. 727.

serve two masters, were often caught between two stools: "If they would benefit their constituency, they must maintain their influence and popularity in Congress: but if they urge forward a just, but unpopular petition, they lose their influence in Congress; and when that is lost, they have no power to benefit their constituency."¹⁰ This dilemma, Hyde felt, was the real reason why the Mormons were unable to obtain compensation for their losses. In Hyde's opinion, the only ultimate hope for the Saints lay with the Kingdom of God. Even in the spring of 1844, he insisted, there was "more wisdom and manifest in one of our councils at Nauvoo, than you would ever see here [Washington]. Man's wisdom is folly--his strength is weakness, and a Republican form of Government is as unwieldy in the hands of the people, as a 'Long Tom' in the hands of a school boy."¹¹

Before the Council of Fifty could "break the thread," and take over the reins of the government of the

¹⁰Orson Hyde to John E. Page, May 6, 1844 (original MS in Mormon Papers, Woodward folder, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library).

¹¹Ibid.

United States, the political Kingdom of God would have to attain a degree of independence from the United States. In Nauvoo, the possibility of achieving this was indeed slight. According to Brigham Young, Smith in fact expressly charged the Council of Fifty with 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."¹²

The Prophet's desire to remove the Saints from Illinois was thus inextricably bound up with the immediate circumstances leading to the organization of the Council of Fifty. In early March of 1844, Bishop George Miller, one of the leaders of a group of Mormons who had been sent to the Wisconsin pine lands to cut lumber for the construction of the Nauvoo temple, returned to Nauvoo bearing two letters addressed respectively to the First Presidency of the Church and to Smith. In these letters, Miller and Apostle Lyman Wight petitioned church leaders for permission to lead the Wisconsin

¹²Millennial Star, XXVI (1864), 328.

Mormons to the table-lands of Texas in order to establish a Mormon colony.¹³ In his personal history, Joseph Smith recorded that on March 11, 1844, he commenced with the organization of the Council of Fifty for the purpose of taking

. . . 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, . . .¹⁴

The Council of Fifty acted on the matter at once. On March 14, it sent Lucien Woodworth to Texas to negotiate with Sam Houston and the Texas Congress for the acquisition of a tract of territory in the Nueces River region large enough to settle not only the Wisconsin Saints but also the entire Church.¹⁵

¹³History of the Church, VI, 255-60.

¹⁴Ibid., 260-61.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 264; Miller, A Mormon Bishop, p. 48.

Smith and the Council had a number of reasons for choosing Texas as a possible site for establishing the Kingdom. Shortly before the organization of the Council, the Prophet had contemplated Oregon or California as locations

. . . where we can remove to after the temple is completed, and 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.¹⁶

Stephen A. Douglas and Henry Clay both advised the Saints to choose Oregon. But Smith had heard that his old enemies the Missourians were already moving there in large numbers. California was still in the hands of Mexico, and the Mexican government was not favorably disposed towards North American immigration after the loss of Texas. In 1844, migration to Texas was one of the few alternatives open to the Mormons. The political situation in Texas at the time, moreover, augured well for the establishment of a Mormon state in that area.

¹⁶History of the Church, VI, 222.

The lands on which the Mormons wanted to settle were in the region extending from the Nueces River south to the Rio Grande disputed between Mexico and Texas since the treaty of Velasco in 1836. In this treaty, the Texans forced the captive Santa Anna to recognize their independence, and to acquiesce in territorial claims extending the boundary of the new republic to the Rio Grande. Santa Anna, after his release, refused to recognize these treaty terms and engaged in numerous border raids in an attempt to bring the Texans to terms. The region between the Rio Grande and the Nueces was largely uninhabited. The Mexicans could cross into Texan territory without difficulty, causing considerable anxiety to the Texas government. Texans, therefore, were eager to have large groups of settlers move into the area in order to establish a bulwark against both Mexican and Indian deprivations. Sale of public lands, furthermore, was one of the principal sources of revenue for the financially embarrassed republic. The Mormons thus had good reason to believe that they would be welcome in Texas.¹⁷

¹⁷William C. Binkley, The Expansionist Movement in Texas, 1836-1850 (Berkeley, Cal., 1925), pp. 43-67; Joseph William Schmitz, Texan Statecraft, 1836-1845 (San Antonio, 1941), pp. 202-204.

Mormon plans, of course, were based on the assumption that Texas would remain independent. In the spring of 1844, this supposition was not unreasonable. Annexation fever in the United States had subsided considerably after an armistice in June, 1843, had ended the bloody border warfare. The political situation in the United States, moreover, gave the Mormons hopes that annexation would never take place. Both Henry Clay and Martin Van Buren thought it politically expedient to oppose annexation. Anti-slavery Democrats and Whigs, therefore, worried President Sam Houston and southern expansionists considerably. Nevertheless, Houston submitted the annexation question to the Texas Congress in January, 1844. The Texan minister to Washington received instructions to negotiate for annexation and had all but completed the draft treaty when the American Secretary of State, Abel P. Upshur, in February, 1844 was killed by a gun explosion on the U.S.S. Princeton. To the Mormons, who saw in all disasters and catastrophes the movements of divine providence, Upshur's death, in retrospect, was a fulfillment of prophecy and omen favorable to their aspirations. Two months after the disaster, Brigham Young remarked: "The Lord is cutting off the bitterest branches.

Look at the explosion of the big gun on board of the Princeton war-steamer at Washington. God will deliver his faithful Saints."¹⁸

The Council of Fifty, however, did not feel that it could leave the matter entirely to God. It had sent an emissary to Washington in order to keep abreast of the latest developments on the Texas situation. Orson Hyde's letters to Joseph Smith reveal that he was well informed of developments in the capital. Hyde predicted that as a result of strong opposition by Whigs and anti-slavery Democrats an annexation treaty would be turned down by Congress: "She [the United States] is afraid of England, afraid of Mexico, afraid the Presidential election will be twisted by it."¹⁹ Finally, annexation would of course not take place if God willed it so: "There are many powerful checks upon our government, preventing her from moving in any of these important matters; and for aught I know these checks are permitted to prevent our government from extending her

¹⁸History of the Church, VI, 326.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 371.

jurisdiction over the territory which God designs to give to His Saints."²⁰

Hyde also noted that England and France appeared to be instruments in the hand of God, for both powers vigorously supported Texan independence. Lord Aberdeen, in fact, had developed a "carefully constructed plan for joint action with France." Britain and France were to mediate between Mexico and Texas for a Mexican guarantee of the Rio Grande boundary, and for a Texan guarantee, given to the mediators, that she would remain independent. Under these seemingly auspicious circumstances the Council of Fifty sent its emissary to Texas.²¹

The negotiations between the Council and the Texas government reveal that the Mormon leaders, somewhat too optimistically and prematurely, acted as if the Kingdom of God was already a political state, or at least a quasi-independent government. George Miller referred to the

²⁰Ibid., p. 374.

²¹Phraim D. Adams, British Interests and Activities in Texas (Baltimore, 1910), pp. 176-196.

negotiations as if they were conducted on a diplomatic level between two independent states. He insisted that Lucien Woodworth was sent as

. . . 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.²²

The Republic of Texas was to recognize the Mormon Kingdom of God as an independent nation. In return, the Saints were to help the Texans "defend themselves against Mexico, standing as a go-between [sic] the belligerent powers."²³ Miller's language is in keeping with that one of an address, by George A. Cannon made to a group of Mormon missionaries, that the Kingdom of God was "to become a political power, known and recognized by the powers of the earth; and you, my brethren, may have to be sent forth to represent that power as its accredited agents . . . at the courts of

²² George Miller, Correspondence of Bishop George Miller with the Northern Islander (Saint James, Michigan, 1855), p. 20.

²³ ibid.

foreign nations."²⁴

It seems doubtful, however, that the Texas government formally "received" Woodworth, thereby recognizing the diplomatic pretensions of the "minister." Recognition of the esoteric Mormon government would have placed the Texans in a most embarrassing position vis-a-vis the United States. According to Miller, however, Woodworth returned from Texas with the preliminary draft of a "treaty," although it is unlikely that the Texans saw the negotiations in that light.²⁵

Woodworth arrived back in Illinois on May 2, 1844. On the following day, the Council of Fifty convened and received the report of its emissary. Miller reported that

. . . 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. W. Brown, Lucien Woodworth and

²⁴ Millennial Star, XXIV (1862), 103.

²⁵ Miller, Correspondence, pp. 20-21.

myself were the commissioners appointed to meet the Texan Congress.²⁶

On May 3, the Council of Fifty also "voted to send Almon W. Babbitt on a mission to France."²⁷ The nature and purpose of Babbitt's mission cannot be fully determined. Since the Council of Fifty had no ecclesiastical authority, it could not have sent Babbitt on a church mission. The circumstances of the venture suggest that, like Woodworth's mission to Texas, it had an essential political purpose. It is significant that Babbitt received his commission after the Council of Fifty had deliberated on the Texas question for the better part of a day. It is also noteworthy that Babbitt would later undertake a number of political missions for the Council of Fifty under Brigham Young. Babbitt would also serve as Territorial delegate of the Mormons in Washington. He was, therefore, an important Mormon diplomat.²⁸ It is highly probable that

²⁶ibid.; History of the Church, VI, 351, 356.

²⁷History of the Church, VI, 356.

²⁸ibid.

Babbitt was sent to France as a representative of the Kingdom of God to determine the reaction of the French government to the establishment of a Mormon state in Texas.²⁹

The question arises as to why the Council left no record of sending a special emissary to Great Britain. A likely explanation is that Mormon leaders were already in England on church business. One of these quite possibly may have been designated as "diplomatic" agent of the Kingdom of God. In a letter to the president of the British mission of the Church, Brigham Young stated that the council was "in hopes of sending a special messenger to France in a few days," again implying that the messenger was not on church business.³⁰ It is also possible that the Council of Fifty preferred initial diplomatic contact to be with the French rather than the English. Joseph Smith thought of himself as a Jeffersonian republican, and shared the anti-British bias of his times. Although his

²⁹This idea that Babbitt may have been sent as a diplomatic agent to France was first suggested by Andrus, Joseph Smith and World Government, p. 62.

³⁰History of the Church, VI, 353.

attitude towards the French is conjectural, he did speak in glowing terms of the Marquis de Lafayette. The French had helped establish American independence and they were the first European power to recognize the Republic of Texas; perhaps the Mormons hoped they would do as much for the Kingdom of God.³¹

Events beyond the control of the Mormons, however, soon made it unnecessary for either France or Texas to become committed regarding an independent Mormon state. The Saints, moreover, considered the establishment of the Kingdom of God in Texas as only one of several alternatives in achieving their political goals. When Josiah Quincy and Charles Francis Adams visited Joseph Smith in Nauvoo in the spring of 1844, the Mormon prophet told them "that he might one day so hold the balance between the parties as to render his election [as president of the United States] . . . by no means unlikely."³²

³¹See *ibid.*, p. 391 for Smith's identification with Jeffersonianism; p. 276 for his dislike of the British; p. 275 for his reverence for Lafayette.

³²In William A. Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen, Among the Mormons (New York, 1958), p. 142.

Smith had in fact decided to become a candidate for the presidency some time before the interview with Quincy and Adams. There is reason to believe that the Prophet's candidacy may have been proposed as early as September 28, 1843, in the special council meeting described above.³³ On October 1, 1843, the Times and Seasons, in an editorial titled "Who shall be our next President?" announced "that we may fix upon the man who will be the most likely to render us assistance in obtaining redress for our grievances."³⁴ Although Smith held out little hope that such a man might be found among the Gentiles, he wrote identical letters to five possible candidates: John C. Calhoun, Lewis Cass, Henry Clay, Richard M. Johnson, and Martin Van Buren. In these letters, Smith enumerated briefly the persecutions suffered by the Mormons, requesting a "candid reply to 'What will be your rule of action relative to us as a people,' should fortune favor your ascension to the chief magistracy?"³⁵ Only Calhoun and Clay answered,

³³See above, p. 119.

³⁴History of the Church, VI, 40.

³⁵ibid., pp. 64-65.

and both replied evasively. Calhoun, with greater candor than Clay, informed the Prophet that the "case of Missouri . . . does not come within the jurisdiction of the Federal Government, which is one of limited and specific powers."³⁶ Smith sent stinging replies to both candidates. To Clay, he wrote:

. . . for the glory of America has departed, and God will set a flaming sword to guard the tree of liberty, while such mint-tithing Herods as Van Buren, Boggs, Benton, Calhoun, and Clay are thrust out of the realms of virtue as fit subjects for the kingdom of fallen greatness.³⁷

Yet even before Smith received Clay's answer, he had already decided, at a meeting of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles held on January 29, 1844, to become a candidate for the presidency of the United States.³⁸

³⁶ Ibid., p. 156.

³⁷ In William Alexander Linn, The Story of the Mormons (New York, 1902), p. 251.

³⁸ History of the Church, VI, 188.

Why did Smith decide to run for president? According to certain anti-Mormon writers, the Prophet's power in Nauvoo had gone to his head. In a fit of megalomania, he deluded himself into thinking that he was a kind of superman to whom nothing was impossible. Mormon apologists have pointed out that this interpretation overlooks the fact that Smith was forced into his position out of sheer political necessity. Voting as a bloc, Mormons understandably supported that candidate from whom they could expect most favorable treatment. As a result, they held the political balance of power in Illinois. Currying the favor of the Mormons, both Democrats and Whigs had vied with each other in striving to grant the demands of the Saints. Consequently, the Mormons had achieved a status of almost complete autonomy in Nauvoo. This seemingly enviable position, however, soon placed them in a difficult situation. The losing political party would inevitably blame the Mormons for its defeat. As long as the dominant party supported the Mormons there would be no trouble. But the sincerity of such support, in any case, was at best dubious. In 1843, for example, the Mormons had reason to believe that Cyrus Walker the Whig candidate for Congress, had

resorted to trickery in order to secure the Mormon vote. As a result, the Mormons switched to the Democratic ticket at the last moment.³⁹ By the winter of 1843-44, the Saints had thus alienated both Democrats and Whigs in Illinois. On September 6, 1843, citizens of Hancock County held a mass meeting at Carthage and passed the following resolution:

That as it has been too common for several years past for politicians of both political parties, not only of this county, but likewise of the state, to go to Nauvoo and truckle to the heads of the Mormon clan for their influence, we pledge ourselves that we will not support any man of either party in the future who shall thus debase himself.⁴⁰

In the election of 1844, the Mormons, as a result of this situation, decided to vote for their own candidate so as not to repeat the same mistake on a national level. Moreover, it was apparent that they could expect no help from either Whigs or Democrats. The position of the Mormon apologists is most succinctly summarized by B. H. Roberts:

³⁹Roberts, in ibid., pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

⁴⁰Ford, History of Illinois, p. 364.

Of course there could be no hope seriously entertained that . . . [Smith] would be elected; but, . . . if the Saints could not succeed in electing their candidate, they would have the satisfaction of knowing that they had acted conscientiously; they had used their best judgment, under the circumstances, and if they had to throw away their votes, it was better to do so upon a worthy than upon an unworthy individual who might use the weapon they put into his hand to destroy them.⁴¹

Such apologists further maintained that a political campaign would give the Mormons an opportunity to dramatize their cause before the nation. Finally, campaign speeches could be used effectively to propagate Mormonism.⁴²

B. H. Roberts' contention that Smith was not serious about his candidacy is not without factual support. Roberts asked that if Smith had serious hopes of getting elected, why was he "pushing vigorously his project of a western movement for the Church" at the same time?⁴³ Smith occasionally referred to his candidacy with some levity. Once he

⁴¹Roberts, in History of the Church, VI, p. xxxiv.

⁴²G. Homer Durham, Joseph Smith, Prophet-Statesman (Salt Lake City, 1944), p. 145; Roberts, The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo, p. 252.

⁴³Roberts, in History of the Church, VI, xxxiv.

facetiously remarked that "there is oratory enough in the Church to carry me into the presidential chair first slide."⁴⁴ He opined on still another occasion that, "when I get hold of eastern papers, and see how popular I am; I am afraid myself that I shall be elected."⁴⁵

Mormon debunkers and apologists have divorced Smith's candidacy for the presidency of the United States from its historical context and interpreted it in the light of what seems reasonable according to hindsight and their particular opinion of Smith's character. If, as the debunkers believe, the Prophet was indeed an egomaniac suffering from delusions of grandeur, then he may have in fact entertained the hope of being elected President of the United States in 1844. If, however, he was an intelligent and reasonable man acting on the realities of particular situation, as the apologists insist, then his candidacy was preposterous if he took it seriously; hence he cannot possibly have hoped to win the election. Debunkers and apologists, then, agree

⁴⁴Ibid., VI, 198.

⁴⁵Ibid., VI, xxxiv.

on one point: to dignify Smith's 1844 venture as a rational involvement is at the same time to imply that Smith himself acted irrationally.

But what are the facts? The deliberations and activities of the Council of Fifty reveal that Smith viewed his candidacy more soberly than apologists have been willing to admit.

It was not easy for the Prophet and his followers to consider giving up Nauvoo. Reason had compelled them to look westward for the establishment of the Kingdom of God. But was it unreasonable for a man who believed that he was carrying out the will of the Lord to believe that God could establish the Kingdom in Nauvoo, if He wished, by causing Joseph Smith to be elected president of the United States? Viewed from hindsight, this seems a desperate alternative. But to the Mormons in 1844 the situation looked somewhat different. George Miller wrote hopefully. "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."⁴⁶ As a result, the Council of Fifty decided to send all available Elders on missions to campaign for Joseph Smith and to preach Mormonism at the same time. "If God goes with them," remarked Apostle Willard Richards, "who can withstand their influence?"⁴⁷ To anyone who believed with the faith of a Willard Richards, Smith's candidacy was not at all irrational. At any rate, Smith talked much more seriously about his candidacy in the privacy of the Council of Fifty than in public. This discrepancy suggests, as do the denials of polygamy, that the Prophet's public statements must be taken with caution. Smith's own care in keeping the true purposes of his candidacy secret indicates that he knew that the public at large would treat him as demented if it learned of his actual hopes; but this realization also reveals that he at least knew what he was doing.

It is indicative of Smith's caution that in spite of the presidential campaign he did not give up his plans for

⁴⁷History of the Church, VI, 232.

settling the Saints in Texas. He also explored other potential habitats for the Kingdom of God. Orson Hyde, emissary of the Council of Fifty in Washington, had instructions to negotiate with the federal government to secure its aid in settling the Saints in some unoccupied region of the trans-Mississippi west. It was in connection with this mission that Willard Richards was appointed by the Council on March 21, 1844, to draw up a memorial to Congress, requesting the federal government to give Joseph Smith authority to raise an army of 100,000 men that would thereby extend the authority of the United States over Oregon and possibly Texas.⁴⁸ On March 26, this memorial was approved by the Council of Fifty. The emissary of the Council reported from Washington that the Saints could expect little federal support for their plan, and advised Smith and his associates that "if the Saints [are to] possess the kingdom I think they will have to take it; and the sooner it is done the more easily it is accomplished."⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 275-77.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 372.

To Smith, this was gratuitous advice. The problem was not that the Saints had to "take the kingdom," but how this could be accomplished. B. H. Roberts' argument that the Prophet's project to settle the Mormons in the West is evidence that he "did not regard his candidacy as likely to be successful"⁵⁰ is based on syllogistic reasoning that can just as well be reversed. Thus it might be argued that Smith's presence in the presidential race was evidence that he did not contemplate a western movement for the Church as seriously as before the campaign of 1844. Neither point is valid. Rather, it is much more reasonable to argue that in an effort to be able to take his cue from the Lord through the natural events of history, the Mormon Prophet prepared for all eventualities with equal intensity. Perhaps the Kingdom would be established in Texas, perhaps in the United States. Only time could reveal the will of the Lord.

If Smith had not believed his election in 1844 to be a possibility, why did he enlist the entire manpower of the

⁵⁰Roberts, in ibid., p. xxxiv.

Church in a quixotic venture? To prevent the Mormon vote from going either to the Whigs or Democrats required no great effort. The vigor with which the Prophet threw himself and the entire Church into the campaign belies his own casual remarks disavowing any serious political intentions. The logic behind Smith's actions in 1844 may have been a desperate one; yet in view of his sense of mission, in view of the destiny which he believed God had in store for him and for the Kingdom of God, this logic was also inevitable. When the Prophet wrote to Henry Clay that the "glory of America has departed, and God will set a flaming sword to guard the tree of liberty" his words were more than idle rhetoric. They were a fulfillment of prophecy, and a promise. The glory of America, Smith had taught, was to be restored through the efforts of the Mormon Elders. Ultimately, "the dominion of the kingdom would be forever established in the United States." Perhaps the election of 1844 was the time to accomplish this. The only alternative for establishing the kingdom was removal from the United States. In that case, however, it would be a long time before God could "set a flaming sword to guard the tree of liberty."

To the realistic observer, the probability of Smith's election to the presidency of the United States was indeed a fanciful notion. Only too soon, however, even the dimmest of such hopes were erased by the bullets of assassins. On the evening of June 27, 1844, a mob, their faces blackened, stormed the Carthage jail, where Smith and his brother Hyrum were imprisoned on charges of treason. After the assault, the Prophet and his brother lay dead.

The stunned Saints had to bury their hopes of establishing the Kingdom of God in the United States with their prophet. But if they could not revive Smith, some members of the Council of Fifty felt they could revive the plan of setting up the Kingdom in Texas. The United States Senate had rejected the annexation treaty shortly before the Prophet's death. The earlier calculations of the Council had thus proved correct. Lucien Woodworth and George Miller therefore urged Brigham Young to send them to Texas "with the necessary papers, and proceed to meet the Texas Congress as before Joseph's death agreed upon."⁵¹

⁵¹Miller, Correspondence, p. 23.

To their surprise, Young was implacably opposed to the plan, and for good reasons. Under the date of April 30, 1844, Orson Hyde had written Joseph Smith from Washington that a projected buffer state between Texas and Mexico would place the Mormons in a most precarious situation. Mormon independence, Hyde warned, would require the support of a strong army and navy: the necessary requirements for man power and financial resources would easily prove more than the new government could bear.⁵² Moreover, the Senate's rejection of the Texas treaty had done little to stabilize relations between Texas and Mexico. The armistice between the two countries was terminated in June. The establishment of a Mormon buffer state under such conditions would have lead the Saints into a situation from which they were trying to escape--interference in their internal affairs. "Thus," lamented Miller, "all hopes were cut off of establishing a dominion of the kingdom . . . when . . . I verily believed that all that we had concocted in council might so easily be accomplished. I was really

⁵² Orson Hyde to Joseph Smith, April 30, 1844 (typed MS, Brigham Young University Library).

cast down and dejected."⁵³ In 1846, therefore, Young realistically moved the main body of the Saints west and established the Kingdom in the Rocky Mountains the following year.

The death of Joseph Smith was a serious blow to the Saints. Enemies of the Church were jubilant. They believed that Mormonism, stripped of its leader, would come to an inglorious end. For a time, it seemed that such predictions would be fulfilled.

The Mormons split into numerous factions upon Smith's death, the leader of each claiming the mantle of the Prophet. This contention was almost inevitable because church government contained no provision for succession to leadership, and because there was no precedent in history to fall back on. It was Brigham Young who triumphed over all opposition and factions, assuming Smith's role. His rivals based their claims to leadership on the subjective and nebulous principle of revelation. Young, more realistically, left revelation to his competitors and asserted his right to leadership

⁵³Miller, Correspondence, p. 23.

as head of the Quorum of the Twelve who held the highest authority in the Church next to the First Presidency. This claim was sustained by an assembly of Mormons in Nauvoo on August 8, 1844. Sidney Rigdon, who a few days earlier had raised the entire question of the succession by asking the members of the Church to appoint him as "guardian," was excommunicated. For the majority of church members, those who accepted the authority of Brigham Young, the question of succession was therefore solved within six weeks of the Prophet's death. Young, by grounding his claim upon his headship of the Quorum, had established a precedent which was to become a fixed pattern in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints after its exodus to the Great Basin.⁵⁴

Many of the Saints, however, refused to accept the leadership of Young and followed instead the self-appointed heads of the numerous splinter groups that had arisen following Smith's death. The Council of Fifty contributed to the confusion during the time when the Church was without

⁵⁴History of the Church, VII, 224-43.

a head. On July 30, 1844, George Miller and Alexander Badlam proposed to "call together the Council of Fifty and organize the Church." Apostles George A. Smith and Willard Richards, themselves members of the Council, informed the petitioners "that the Council of Fifty was not a Church organization." Membership in that group was irrespective of religious beliefs; "the organization of the Church belonged to the Priesthood alone."⁵⁵ However, Lyman Wight, another member of the Quorum of the Twelve, considered the authority of the Council to be superior to that of the Apostles. In his view, upon the death of Smith,

. . . 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. . . . that had not the fifty constituted weakness to have ordained all the highest authorities into that number.⁵⁶

⁵⁵Ibid., VI, 213.

⁵⁶Joseph Smith and Heman C. Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1836-1844 (Lamoni, Iowa), II, 90.

Then, the Council of Fifty should have organized the leadership of the Church, recognizing "young Joseph," the son of Smith as the rightful heir to the succession.⁵⁷ Wight therefore subscribed to the opinion of Sidney Rigdon, who also believed that the succession should have gone to Smith's son.⁵⁸

Lyman Wight had always been one of the most independent minded of Smith's associates. W. W. Phelps appropriately called him the "Wild Ram of the Mountains," a name that was to remain with Wight for life. Wight affirmed he would defer to only one man--Joseph Smith. He consequently refused to recognize the authority of Brigham Young. Wight urged the removal of the Saints to Texas in spite of Young's opposition as had Miller and Woodworth. Wight's will was as resolute as that of Young, but he could not equal the latter in self-control and diplomatic skill. Only the Wisconsin Saints recognized Wight's claim

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 91.

⁵⁸ In 1860, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was organized with the son of Joseph Smith, Jr., Joseph Smith III, as head.

to leadership. Wisely avoiding a direct confrontation at one of the most critical times in the history of the Church, Brigham Young allowed Wight and his followers to depart for Texas, albeit without his blessings.⁵⁹

For the time being, George Miller reluctantly acquiesced to the authority of Brigham Young. As late as December, 1846, while the Saints were already well on their way to the Great Basin, Miller still hoped to convince Young of the superiority of the Texas plan. Although "a very few words from different ones on the subject caused him to confess the impracticability of his plans," Miller continued to chafe under Young's leadership.⁶⁰ Miller, moreover, did not feel sympathetic to or comfortable with the numerous new members of the Council of Fifty who would not have received their appointments had they not supported Brigham Young: "I was greatly disgusted . . . so disgusted that I from this time determined to go

⁵⁹History of the Church, VII, 249-49, 254-55.

⁶⁰Hosea Stout, Diaries (original MSS, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah), December 27, 1846.

with them no longer."⁶¹ The former Bishop made his way to Texas and joined Lyman Wight and his Wisconsin colony.

After the main body of the Church arrived in the valley of the Great Salt Lake in 1847, the Quorum of the Twelve summoned Wight and his followers to the New Zion. The leader of the Texas Mormons, however, still insisted on the superior authority of the Council of Fifty although he refused to accept Young's leadership of that body. He answered that "nobody under the light of the heavens except Joseph Smith or John Smith, the president of the Fifty, could call him from Texas to come to Salt Lake City."⁶² The quorum considered this answer sufficient grounds for excommunication, and this extreme penalty was imposed.

The succession controversy revealed that Joseph Smith had impressed the idea of a theocratic, temporal kingdom of

⁶¹H. W. Mills, "De Tal Palo Tal Astilla," Annual Publications of the Historical Society of Southern California (1917), p. 111.

⁶²Journal of William Leyland, in Herman Hale Smith, "The Lyman Wight Colony in Texas, 1846-1858" (unpublished MS, Brigham Young University Library, n.d.), p. 22.

God very deeply on the minds of his followers. James Jesse Strang, whose schismatic movement of 1844 presented the most serious threat to Young's claim to leadership, set himself up as monarch ruling over a theocratic Kingdom of God on Beaver Island, in Lake Michigan. Although Strang had never belonged to the Council of Fifty, several members of that body joined him even before he had formally organized his kingdom in 1850.⁶³ Charles B. Thompson, another aspirant to the mantle of the Prophet, made himself king of a theocratic Mormon settlement in Iowa. Gladden Bishop, who attracted a group of Wisconsin Saints to his cause organized "what he calls the Kingdom of God, and it was the queerest performance I ever saw," affirmed Sarah Scott who reported on the event.⁶⁴ Alpheus Cutler, a member of the Council of Fifty, established a political kingdom of God. Schismatic movements such as the

⁶³ For Strang's relationship to the political Kingdom of God see Klaus Hansen, "The Making of King Strang: A Re-examination," Michigan History, 46 (1962), 201-219.

⁶⁴ Sarah Scott to her mother Abigail Hall, March 31, 1848, in George F. Partridge (ed.), "The Death of a Mormon Dictator, Letters of Massachusetts Mormons, 1843-1848," The New England Quarterly, IX (1936), 614.

Bickertonites, Brewsterites, Hedrickites, and Morrisites established short-lived theocratic governments.⁶⁵

The succession crisis seriously depleted the members of the Council of Fifty. At least fifteen of its members refused to follow the leadership of Brigham Young, giving loyalty to other claimants or starting schismatic movements of their own. To Young, this loss was also a gain, for he could now fill the vacancies with men loyal to him. As a result, the Council emerged from the crisis as unified as it had been under Joseph Smith, a willing and capable tool in the hands of Brigham Young for shaping the destinies of the Kingdom of God at the most critical period of its existence.

⁶⁵On various Mormon splinter groups see Cecil E. McGavin, "Apostate Factions Following the Martyrdom of Joseph Smith," The Improvement Era, XLVII (1944), 205, 279, 433, 498, 553, 609, 660.

CHAPTER V

EXODUS

Joseph Smith's death by itself would have made the year 1844 notable in Mormon history. But 1844 was a decisive time for the Mormons also for other reasons. The Saints would have been forced to acknowledge the fact that their days in Nauvoo were numbered except for the improbable election of Smith to the presidency of the United States. The martyrdom of the Prophet heightened the crisis in Mormon life. This tragic occurrence, the Gentiles believed, signalled the end of Mormonism. James Gordon Bennett, editor of the New York Herald, wrote in an extra edition that announced the death of the Prophet that "the 'latter day saints' have indeed come to the latter day."¹ Just two days later, on July 10, he reversed his opinion:

Instead of sealing the fate of Mormonism, we are now rather inclined to believe that this revolting transaction may give only additional and increased strength to that sect. Joe and his brother will be regarded

¹Quoted in Brodie, p. 397.

as martyrs to their faith, and but little knowledge of human nature and the history of the past is necessary to inform us of the fact that violence, oppression, and bloodshed strengthen instead of subduing fanaticism.²

The Gentile inhabitants of Illinois soon came to the same conclusion. As a result they followed the example of the Missourians and hounded the Mormons until, in 1845, they extracted a pledge from Brigham Young that he and his followers would leave the state of Illinois in the spring of 1846.³

During this period, the Council of Fifty assumed major governmental responsibilities in Nauvoo. According to Hosea Stout and John D. Lee, its function was "to bring a semblance of order into the civil affairs" of Nauvoo. "Whenever anything of importance was on foot this Council was called to deliberate upon it."⁴ Under a system of interlocking chairmanships and directorships the Council controlled the city government (the mayor was a Council member), the school board, and the Mercantile and Mechanical

²Ibid.

³History of the Church, VII, 449-50.

⁴Lee, Mormonism Unveiled, p. 173; Stout, Diary, February 16, 1845.

Association. After the repeal of the Nauvoo City Charter, which had been a major cause of contention between Mormons and Gentiles, the Council of Fifty corresponded with Governor Thomas Ford on the best method of organizing the city. Through a new act of incorporation, five trustees governed Nauvoo, three of whom were members of the Council of Fifty.⁵

The Council played a significant role in defending the Saints against the mob violence which was threatening to break into open civil war in 1845. Terrorism had begun soon after Smith's death. In the fall of 1844, the enemies of the Mormons in Hancock County sent out invitations for a "wolf hunt" designed to drive Mormons off their land and burn their homes in a systematic manner. The result was that small bands of ruffians pillaged and burned Mormon homes and ran off the Mormons' livestock. Courts and law enforcement officers were powerless. In desperation, the Saints took the law into their own hands and repaid their enemies in kind. The Council of Fifty urged moderation upon the Saints. Understandably, it defended those for whom arrest warrants had been issued: "It was considered

⁵History of the Church, VII, 399-400.

best for those who are hunted with writs to go on missions."⁶ Tension, nevertheless, increased. Reprisals brought new retaliations. In the fall of 1845, rumors began to circulate among the Gentiles that they were about to be massacred by the Mormons. Consequently, anti-Mormons requested military aid from the state to subdue the Saints. The latter, in response, prepared for defense under the leadership of the Council of Fifty. The Council's earlier policy "to pursue a medium course avoiding extremes that might raise an excitement in the country" had failed utterly.⁷ In the fall of 1845 Gentile depredations in Hancock County increased alarmingly. On October 4, the Council of Fifty met to consider correspondence received from Governor Ford, General John J. Hardin, commander of the state militia, and a committee of citizens from Quincy, all to the effect that the Mormons could expect no protection in Illinois. Unless the Saints left the state the following spring, warned the citizens of Quincy, "violent measures will be resorted to, to compel your removal, which will

⁶Ibid., p. 380.

⁷Ibid., pp. 406-407.

result in most disastrous consequences to yourselves and your opponents."³

These warnings, however, came some time after Young had made up his mind to remove the Mormons from Illinois. Like Joseph Smith, Young knew that the Kingdom of God could not remain in peace in Nauvoo. Yet before he could transplant the Kingdom he had to be sure that it was sufficiently strong to survive the strain of removal. The remaining part of the year 1844, therefore, was spent in consolidating his power. Had he announced his decision to remove the Church from Illinois in 1844, it is quite probable that he would have met considerable opposition from the Saints. For many of them Nauvoo was the third location of the anticipated Zion. To give up their land and homes once more would be a severe test of faith even for the most stalwart. Furthermore, the migration of a people numbering approximately twelve thousand souls required extensive preparation. A hasty, ill-organized exodus could easily be disastrous. Young recorded in his personal history that in 1845 he saw Joseph Smith in

³Ibid., pp. 449-453.

a dream, saying: "'Brother Brigham, don't be in a hurry', which was repeated the second and third times with a degree of sharpness."⁹

To the Gentiles, such delay indicated that the Mormons had chosen to remain permanently in Nauvoo. This mistaken belief contributed considerably to the persecutions visited upon the Saints. When, in the fall of 1845, Young finally publicized the decision of the Mormons to leave Illinois he had been forced to reveal his plans by the threats of the Gentiles. By that time, however, feelings ran so high that the impending departure of the Mormons failed to pacify enemies of the Saints. In fact, the increased furor of the mob suggests that Young may have been wise in keeping his plans confidential as long as he had. Now that the Mormons were leaving for certain, Gentiles saw a final chance to settle old scores and most of all an opportunity to make a profit. Systematically, they made a potential buyers' market more favorable by crowding the seller for time, by putting to the torch the houses of those Mormons who would not sell at the ridiculously low prices offered, and by

⁹Ibid., p. 435.

creating a general atmosphere of fear. That chaos and hysteria did not ensue was largely the result of the effective leadership of Brigham Young and the Council of Fifty.¹⁰

The most important task facing the Council of Fifty in 1845 was the preparation of the exodus of the Mormons from Illinois.¹¹ On March 1, the Council decided to "send nine brethren westward, to search out a location for the saints."¹² Many subsequent meetings of the Council dealt with the problem of emigration. One of the reasons why Young hesitated about leaving Nauvoo was that he had to

¹⁰ See especially the accounts of Bernard DeVoto, The Year of Decision, 1846 (Boston, 1943), pp. 73-89; Ray B. West, Kingdom of the Saints (New York, 1957), pp. 156-164. Neither, however, were aware of the role of the Council of Fifty.

¹¹ Some of the more important of the numerous detailed accounts of the exodus are James A. Little, From Kirtland to Salt Lake City (Salt Lake City, 1890); Preston L. Nibley, Exodus to Greatness: The Story of the Mormon Migration (Salt Lake City, 1947); Andrew L. HOFF, "The Mormon Migration to Utah" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of California, 1918). The first to bring out the role of the Council of Fifty in the exodus was Andrus, Joseph Smith and World Government, pp. 67-86, although Andrus omitted significant details related in this chapter. The best contemporary source is the diary of Hosea Stout.

¹² History of the Church, VII, 379.

have a place where the Saints could settle permanently. It is of course a moot question to speculate whether or not Mormonism could have survived another migration after the exodus from Nauveo. Young, at any rate, did not want to risk such a possibility. But where could the Mormons find lands not coveted by the Gentiles and still sufficiently fertile to sustain a people that numbered about twelve thousand with the ambitious plan of establishing an earthly kingdom of god that would hold many times that number? Texas was out of the question, in spite of the pleadings of George Miller and Lucien Woodworth. The prospects of establishing the Kingdom in California also seemed dim. Too many adventurers were already on their way to California, raising before Young's eyes the specter of renewed conflict. The same was true of Oregon. Vancouver Island was another possibility, suggested, like Oregon, by Stephen A. Douglas, who seemed to have believed that in this manner he could have accomplished two purposes at the same time: removal of the obnoxious Mormons from Illinois, and establishment of a counterweight against British power in the Pacific Northwest. Young, however, seems not to have considered this possibility seriously, although he

did initiate negotiations with the British crown for the settlement of converts from Great Britain on the island.¹³ In fact, about the only possible region open to Mormon colonization was the area of the Great Basin. Throughout the spring and the summer of 1845, the Council of Fifty discussed the future site of the Kingdom of God, making careful studies of as much of the western travel literature as was available at the time, especially of the reports of John C. Fremont. On September 9, 1845, the Council of Fifty "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."¹⁴ On October 4, the committee made a full and detailed report of the necessary requirements for outfitting the Saints on their projected journey.¹⁵

During the winter of 1845-46, depredations against the Mormons became so violent that the Council of Fifty

¹³ Ibid., p. 480.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 379.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 454-55.

had to alter its original plans of starting the exodus from Nauvoo in the spring of 1846. As a result, the Council worked feverishly through the winter to perfect the quasi-military organization under which the migration was to be directed. On January 13, 1846, the Council of Fifty met in the almost completed Nauvoo temple:

The captains of fifties and tens made reports of the number in their respective companies, who were prepared to start 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.¹⁶

On January 19, the Council decided that the captains of the different companies should prepare as many of their men as possible to start west. On February 4, flatboats and skiffs took the first company of Saints through the floating ice of the Mississippi to the Iowa shore. It may have been mere coincidence that Charles Shumway, a member of the Council of Fifty, was the first to cross the river, but it was also fittingly symbolic.¹⁷

¹⁶ibid., p. 567.

¹⁷Stout, Diary, January 19, 1846; February 4, 1846.

The first encampment was set up at Sugar Creek, Iowa, on the west side of the Mississippi River. It was from here, that on March 1, the first wagons rumbled westward across the frozen plains. As Benjamin F. Johnson noted, the Council of Fifty continued to direct "all general movements relating to our exodus as a people from Nauvoo."¹⁸ John D. Lee and William Clayton have recorded frequent Council meetings in the tents and temporary shelters along the way.¹⁹ Most of these meetings, however, were attended only by a fraction of the total membership of the Council, because of the considerable distance between various camps set up to facilitate emigration. Only at Winter Quarters, on the east bank of the Missouri River, did the Council convene in a number of meetings with a majority of its members present. It was here that the final plans for the trip to the Great Basin were discussed. Winter Quarters became the major way station for the Mormon emigrants. Here the hardest part of the journey, across the plains

¹⁸Johnson to Gibbs, p. 23.

¹⁹Clayton, pp. 40, 202; Lee, "Diaries and Official Records," pp. 103, 104, 110, 163.

of Nebraska and of Wyoming, lay still ahead. At Winter Quarters, Brigham Young gave his only revelation to be published in the Dctrine and Covenants. On January 14, 1847, he made known "The Word and Will of the Lord concerning the Camp of Israel in their journeyings to the West."²⁰ It merely confirmed the para-military organization already effected by the Council of Fifty in Nauvoo, and largely patterned after Zion's Camp of 1834 in Missouri. The revelation also gave some practical advice on how the Saints should conduct themselves on the trip. According to John D. Lee, the "Word and Will of the Lord" was "first laid before the Council as a revelation to the church and acknowledged by the Council of Fifty. It was then presented to the First Presidency of the seventies and so on down and acknowledged."²¹

On April 16, a pioneer company of 143 men, three women, and two children, left Winter Quarters under the leadership of Brigham Young to locate the precise area in

²⁰Doctrine and Covenants, Section 136.

²¹Journals of John D. Lee, 1846-47 and 1859, ed. Charles Kelly (Salt Lake City, 1938), p. 53.

the Valley of the Great Salt Lake where the Kingdom should be established. Eighteen members of the Council of Fifty accompanied this advance group. Of considerable interest is a meeting of the Council held on Sunday, May 30. William Clayton, clerk of the Council, recorded in his diary that

. . . all the members of the council of the K. of G. in the camp except brother Thomas Bullock, went unto the bluffs and selecting a small, circular, level spot surrounded by bluffs and out of sight, we clothed ourselves in the priestly garments and offered up prayer to god for ourselves, this camp and all pertaining to it, the brethren in the army, our families and all the Saints, President Young being mouth. We all felt well and glad for this privilege. . . . Albert Carrington and Porter Rockwell . . . having no clothing with them, stood guard at a little distance from us to prevent interruption.²²

On July 19, ill with fever, Brigham Young sent a small party ahead to seek the best route through the canyons into the Great Basin of the Wasatch. On July 22, two members of the Council of Fifty, Orson Pratt and Erastus Snow, were

²²Those belonging to the Council of Fifty in the first pioneer group were Ezra T. Benson, Thomas Bullock, Albert Carrington, William Clayton, Heber C. Kimball, Amasa Lyman, Orson Pratt, John Pack, Willard Richards, Orrin Porter Rockwell, Albert P. Rockwood, Shadrach Roundy, Charles Shumway, George A. Smith, Erastus Snow, Wilford Woodruff, Phineas H. Young, and Brigham Young. See Clayton, p. 202; Lyman, p. 37.

the first to view the territory of the future Kingdom of God over which they hoped to rule.

A question much debated by historians is whether the Mormons, upon leaving Nauvoo, intended to establish a separate government beyond the territorial limits of the United States, or whether they anticipated becoming part of the federal Union. Nineteenth century writers such as Benjamin G. Ferris assumed that the Mormons had attempted permanently to remove themselves from the United States. When the Mexican War resulted in their new homesite becoming federal territory, they had to make the best of a bad situation: "The next best thing to becoming a state independent of the Union, was to become an independent state of the Union."²³ Frederick Logan Paxson came essentially to the same conclusion. In his opinion, the Mormons did not look favorably upon the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. After its ratification, however, there was nothing they could do "but make the best of these facts and to seek from the United States the same sort of autonomy they had received from

²³ Benjamin F. Ferris, Utah and the Mormons (New York, 1856), p. 165.

Illinois."²⁴

As Leonard J. Arrington has pointed out, these writers have ignored considerable evidence which suggests that the Mormons may have intended all the while to associate their new land and future with that of the United States. In Arrington's opinion, Hubert Howe Bancroft, who wrote his History of Utah in cooperation with Mormon church officials, came nearer to the truth by writing that "the Mormons did not, however, hope to remain an independent republic, nor did they probably wish to do so."²⁵ But Bancroft was ambiguous, and so is Arrington. The latter historian called attention to "continuous Mormon pleas for civil aid and federal recognition" and to "repeated Mormon assertions, if they are worth anything, that all the troubles they had been through had not alienated them from 'the institutions of our country.'"²⁶

²⁴Frederick Logan Paxson, History of the American Frontier, 1763-1893 (New York, 1924), p. 349.

²⁵Quoted in Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, p. 435.

²⁶Ibid.

To assess the worth of these assertions is precisely the crux of the problem. Therald N. Jensen attempted to answer this question in 1938. His investigation contradicted the assertion of Leland Creer, who found "no evidence that the Mormons had ever contemplated withdrawing from the American Union. Nothing is more clearly established from the sources than their continued loyalty and patriotism."²⁷ Jensen cited considerable evidence casting doubt about the Mormons' loyalty to the United States government, and on their desire to leave the United States. But he considered the evidence to the contrary far stronger, so that in balancing Mormon sentiments of disloyalty against their professed love for the Union, the scales tipped heavily in favor of loyalty to the United States. Expressions of Mormon disloyalty were mere "back eddies," a natural result of resentment against persecution.²⁸ Jensen urged that it "is helpful to constantly bear in mind that the Mormon Pioneer was also an American

²⁷Leland H. Creer, The Founding of an Empire: The Exploration and Colonization of Utah, 1776-1856 (Salt Lake City, 1947), pp. 335-36.

²⁸Jensen, "Mormon Theory of Church and State," pp. 49-53.

pioneer."²⁹ This sentence is the key to understanding Jensen's position, and that of several other Mormon historians, on the topic of Mormon loyalty. In writing of the Mormons as if they were typical frontiersmen, these historians, in the tradition of Frederick Jackson Turner, make Mormon history part of the mainstream of American life. The Mormon emigration to the Rocky Mountains is interpreted as part of the westward course of empire, part of the Americanization of the Rocky Mountain West.³⁰

These writers, however, failed to perceive that Mormonism was part of manifest destiny only in a very peculiar way. It is true that Joseph Smith, in the campaign of 1844 had portrayed himself as an expansionist:

Oregon belongs to this government honorably; 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

²⁹Ibid., p. 55.

³⁰ Thus Leland H. Croer, Utah and the Nation (Seattle, Wash., 1929); Neff, "The Mormon Migration to Utah." These two works were doctoral dissertations written under Herbert E. Bolton at the University of California. Bolton himself was strongly influenced by Frederick Jackson Turner. See also DeVoto, p. 87.

liberty, give her the right hand of fellowship, and refuse not the same friendly grip to Canada and Mexico.³¹

Such ideas, however, must not be separated from Smith's hope that the time would come when the Kingdom of God would be master over the United States. Should this mastery not occur in the immediate future, Smith was not at all adverse to having Texas remain an independent state.

The error in the work of apologist historians is that they have written Mormon history from hindsight. The image of Mormons leaving the United States in order to set up an independent kingdom of God conflicts with the subsequent self-conscious Mormon view of themselves as loyal citizens of the pluralistic twentieth century. What these writers fail to acknowledge, simply, is that a transformation has taken place in the attitude of Mormons towards the United States. This shift, while patently apparent, has in fact served to obscure Mormon understanding of their own past. Of course, such distorting influences upon historiography have been ever present in the reconstruction of the national pattern of American history.

³¹History of the Church, VI, 206.

Jensen solved the problem of Mormon loyalty towards the United States with the bland assumption that the "Mormon pioneer was also an American pioneer," as if this fact would automatically take care of a potential conflict of loyalties.³² In the nineteenth century, it was of equal if not more significance that this American pioneer was also a Mormon pioneer. Since both, to the apologist, were the same thing, conflict of loyalties was eliminated. That is why to Jensen the political Kingdom of God could not figure prominently in the immediate aspirations of the Mormons. The raison d'être of Mormonism, said Jensen, was not to set up a political kingdom of God, but to wait for Christ.³³ As anti-Mormon writers had ignored the genuine, democratic and patriotic motives inspiring the Mormons, the apologists ignored the equally authentic separatist tendencies that found expression in the political Kingdom of God. Since it seemed almost impossible to reconcile the contradictory evidence, each side either

³²Jensen, p. 55.

³³Ibid., p. 20. See also Durham, Joseph Smith, Prophet-Statesman, p. 101; Keith Melville, "Mormon Theory of Church and State" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah), p. 11.

ignored or explained away those sources that did not fit the image they wanted to portray. Only in recent years has one writer, Thomas F. O'Dea, come to the conclusion that separatist and patriotic tendencies in Mormonism were equally genuine and capable of existing side by side because "the Mormons never worked out consistently the political implications of their religious philosophy."³⁴ In other words, the Mormons, in 1846, could leave the United States, dream of establishing a separate, autonomous kingdom of God, and still consider themselves exemplary patriots. The plans and activities of the Council of Fifty, in fact, bear out O'Dea's interpretation. In the light of the actual nature of the political Kingdom of God, therefore, a re-examination of Mormon loyalty to the United States is necessary.

The negotiations between the Council of Fifty and the Texas government reveal beyond doubt that the Mormons had at least contemplated the possibility of leaving the territorial limits of the United States. Likewise, there can have been no question that in the fall of 1845, Brigham

³⁴ Thomas F. O'Dea, The Mormons (Chicago, 1957), p. 171.

Young knew that the area into which he hoped to move the Saints was not part of the United States. In an "Epistle to the Brethren of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Scattered Abroad Through the United States of America," Young admonished his followers that removal beyond the boundaries of the United States was a test of orthodoxy:

If the authorities of this church cannot abide in peace within the pale of this nation, neither can those who implicitly hearken to their wholesome counsel. A word to the wise is sufficient. You all know and have doubtless felt for years the necessity of a removal provided the government should not be sufficiently protective to allow us to worship God according to the dictates of our own consciences, and of the omnipotent voice of eternal truth. Two cannot walk together except they be agreed. Jacob must be expatriated while Esau held dominion.³⁵

This letter indicates that Young had not contemplated the possibility that the United States would take over in the near future the region where the Saints hoped to establish the Kingdom of God. The Mexican War, however, changed these calculations. Young knew in the spring of 1846 that it was highly probable that the Kingdom of God would come under the jurisdiction of the United States.

³⁵History of the Church, VII, 478-79.

In the fact that the Saints readily offered the federal government a battalion for service in the war Mormon apologists believe they have found proof that Young desired affiliation with the United States.³⁶ Indeed, to several generations of Mormons, the epic March of the Mormon Battalion from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to San Diego, California, has become shining proof of Mormon loyalty to flag and country, a supreme example of a people harassed by a government serving its persecutors in time of crisis. Contrary to popular belief among Latter-day Saints, however, the battalion was not requested by the United States government. Rather, as even Mormon historian E. H. Roberts pointed out, a contingent of 2,000 men was actually offered to the government by the Mormons, "and the service was almost piteously pleaded for" by Jesse C. Little,

³⁶The interpretation by Richard Vetterli, Mormonism, Americanism, and Politics (Salt Lake City, 1961), pp. 329-32, is typical of this point of view. Earlier studies of the Mormon Battalion include Frank A. Golder, The March of the Mormon Battalion from Council Bluffs to California (New York, 1928); Brigham H. Roberts, The Mormon Battalion: Its History and Achievements (Salt Lake City, 1919); Daniel Tyler, A Concise History of the Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War, 1846-1847 (n. p., 1881).

representative of the Saints in Washington.³⁷ Young and the Council of Fifty had offered the service of Mormon men in order to obtain badly needed cash for the Saints through the military pay earned by the Mormon soldiers. President James K. Polk was somewhat apprehensive of so large a Mormon army moving west and only authorized a contingent of five hundred men. In his diary he recorded

. . . that when Colonel Kearney reached that country, he was authorized to receive five hundred of the Mormons into the service so as to conciliate them and prevent them from becoming the enemies of the United States, but if the Mormons reached the country, I did not desire them the only forces in the country.³⁸

The motives of the Council of Fifty in sending out the Mormon Battalion, then, were primarily economic. Furthermore, the men who answered the call did so out of loyalty to the Kingdom of God not to the United States. Hosea Stout recorded in his diary that he was "uncommonly wrought up" about the request. He was "glad to learn of war against the United States and was in hopes that it

³⁷History of the Church, VII, 612-13.

³⁸James K. Polk, Diary, ed. Milo M. Quaife (Chicago, 1910), I, 449-50.

might never end until they were entirely destroyed for they had driven us into the wilderness & was now laughing at our calamities."³⁹ Such feelings were a result of the persecutions which the Saints had suffered almost constantly during the brief history of the Church. Although the United States had not been responsible for these outrages, the Mormons charged the government with failure to secure justice for them. Irene Haskall Pomeroy wrote from Nauvoo in the summer of 1845: "The fourth of July is just past. I suppose there were balls, tea parties and the like in the east, but here there were nothing of this kind. The Mormons think the liberty and independence of the United States has been too long trampled upon to be celebrated."⁴⁰ Ursulina B. Hascall, in 1849, expressed the opinion that "the destruction of the states as a nation is just as sure as the sun will ever rise and set. It is near at hand. It is all ready to burst upon it."⁴¹ Such

³⁹Stout, June 26, 1846.

⁴⁰Irene Haskall Pomeroy to Ashbel G. Hascall, July 6, 1845, in "Letters of a Proselyte. The Hascall-Pomeroy Correspondence," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXV (1957), 63.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 254.

sentiments were not isolated expressions by members of the Mormon rank and file. Rather, they were inculcated by the leaders. Brigham Young predicted: "God Almighty will give the United States a pill that will put them to death, and that is worse than lobelia [a poisonous plant]. I am prophet enough to prophesy the downfall of the government that has driven us out. . . . No [sic] to the United States! I see them going to Death and destruction."⁴²

Despite this attitude, a circular letter by church leaders addressed to the non-Mormon world in 1846, asserted: "Our patriotism has not been overcome by fire, by sword, by daylight or by midnight assassinations which we have endured; neither have they alienated us from the institutions of our country."⁴³ This document, of course, was directed to the Gentiles, who were all too eager to suspect the Mormons of disloyalty and treason. Still, the language of the circular did not entirely contradict the private sentiments of the Mormons towards the United States.

⁴²Quoted in Dale Morgan, The Great Salt Lake (New York, 1947), p. 223.

⁴³Times and Seasons, VI (1846), 1096-97.

Brigham Young drew a significant distinction between the Constitution and the "damned rascals who administer the government."⁴⁴ To the Mormons, therefore, it was quite possible to leave the United States and still remain loyal to its institutions. For they were transferring the latter with them in what they believed to be an uncorrupted form in the political institutions of the Kingdom of God. In fact, if the United States was to be destroyed, removal of the Saints beyond its boundaries was necessary for the preservation of the Kingdom of God. Upon arriving in the Great Basin, one of Young's followers wrote: "The Lord has provided this place for us and if we are faithful the troubles and calamities of the Gentile nation will not harm. When all is past, we will step forth from our hiding place the secret chambers spoken of in the bible."⁴⁵ Presumably the Saints would thereafter continue the American political tradition through the political Kingdom of God. In this sense, Mormons considered themselves superior to Gentiles as upholders of basic American institutions and

⁴⁴Journal History, September 3, 1851, p. 4.

⁴⁵Irene H. Pomeroy to Ophelia M. Andrews, March 5, 1848, Utah Historical Quarterly, XXV (1957), 243.

values. Gentiles had perverted the American concept of liberty by allowing the persecution of a minority group. The Mormons wanted to preserve liberty for minorities through the political Kingdom of God. On July 28, 1858, Brigham Young proclaimed in a sermon:

It is published from East to West, and from North to South, that the Mormons are opposed to the government of the United States. That is not true, and never was. But many of the officers and people of the United States are too much opposed to their own institutions, and are taking a course to destroy the best form of government instituted by man. They lay the ax at the root of the tree, and it will fall and be as though it had not been.⁴⁶

Young's statement reveals the difficulty of reconciling two conflicting loyalties. In fact, the Mormons have always pretended that the conflict did not exist. Joseph Smith had given a revelation in 1831 admonishing the Saints that he who "keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land."⁴⁷ Although the Mormon leaders, throughout the nineteenth century, were to cling to this position without deviation, the realities of conflict between the United States and the political

⁴⁶Deseret News, July 28, 1858.

⁴⁷Doctrine and Covenants, 58:21.

Kingdom of God revealed that the Mormons could maintain their position only with some rather strange semantic somersaults, as exemplified by a pronouncement of Apostle John Taylor:

What does it mean, then, where it says if we keep the laws of God, we need not break the laws of the land? Because the laws of Gods are so much more pure and elevated, so much more adapted to the wants and situation of humanity, that we walk right over everything of that sort; and it is nothing comparatively for us to do; what is required we can easily do it, and a great deal on the back of it.⁴⁸

At best, this pronouncement is confused, an indication of its author's own ambivalence toward the problem. Contradictions between the political theories of the Kingdom of God and those of the United States, and conflicts of loyalty posed by the two institutions were such that the Mormons could not safely afford rationally to examine their varied attitudes. By proclaiming a sincerely felt patriotism in Fourth of July orations, claiming undying allegiance to the Constitution and to the institutions of the United States, and proudly pointing to the courageous deeds of their revolutionary forefathers, the Mormons

⁴⁸Journal of Discourses, XX (1879), 166.

glossed over the separatist tendencies of the political Kingdom of God. The Gentiles considered such expressions of patriotism to be the height of hypocrisy. Judge Thomas J. Anderson questioned the honorable intentions of the Mormons:

Will men become attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States when they hear the government constantly denounced as tyrannical and oppressive? It would be as unreasonable to expect to gather grapes from thorns, or frogs from thistles.⁴⁹

What Anderson failed to understand was that men do not always think and do what appears reasonable. Brigham Young was quite sincere when he claimed that "to accuse us of being unfriendly to the Government is to accuse us of hostility to our religion."⁵⁰ One of the major difficulties was that Mormons and Gentiles were using the same words in totally different contexts and with conflicting connotations.

Nevertheless, the problem of Mormon loyalty to the United States needs to be examined as more than a semantic problem. In their vigorous proclamations of loyalty the

⁴⁹Quoted in Montgomery, The Mormon Delusion, p. 310.

⁵⁰Journal of Discourses, II, 172.

Saints were attempting to convince not only the Gentiles but also themselves that their patriotism was burning as bright as ever. This was a hard demand indeed, not only because of persecution by the Gentiles, but also because the political Kingdom of God required of its citizens a separate loyalty that was difficult to harmonize with loyalty to the United States. John D. Lee gave a moving illustration of this conflict in an entry in his journal made on January 5, 1851. Lee had been sent to Southern Utah on the so called Iron County Mission for the purpose of establishing an iron industry. Among the colonists was a large group of converts from the British Isles. During the journey, Lee recorded:

We have had first rate feelings generally. Still I was accused of causing National feelings by speaking of great battles that had been fought by the Americans. I hope never again to excite that kind of National Feelings. All governments on earth but one are corrupt & that is the government of God that is my National Interest.⁵¹

As a member of the Council of Fifty, Lee knew more about this "National Interest" than those who were traveling with him. He knew that one of the main reasons for the

⁵¹"Journal of the Iron County Mission," Utah Historical Quarterly, XX (1952), 260.

exodus was to achieve the ultimate independence of the Kingdom of God, so that it could send its accredited ambassadors to the nations of the earth.

CHAPTER VI

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE COUNCIL OF FIFTY IN THE GREAT BASIN, 1847-1896

The Council of Fifty never fully realized its goal of establishing the Kingdom of God as a separate nation. However, as long as it controlled the temporal affairs of the Kingdom in the Great Basin, it never ceased striving to transform this vision into reality. Having brought the Saints to the Rocky Mountains the Council was presented with a singular opportunity for organizing the government of God without Gentile interference. Biblical prophecy augured well for the establishment of the Kingdom. Joseph Smith had interpreted Isaiah's prediction "that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains" metaphorically, insisting that "it should be in the center of the land."¹ With the organization of the Kingdom in the mountains, Isaiah's

¹Isa. 2:2-3; History of the Church, VI, 318-19.

prophecy and that of Daniel, which referred to the Kingdom of God as a stone "cut out of the mountain," could now be interpreted literally.² According to an editorial in the Millennial Star "the nucleus of the mightiest nation that ever occupied the earth is at length established in the very place where the prophets, wrapt in sacred vision, have long since foreseen it."³ Orson Pratt, applying himself to the task of exegesis, insisted that the government of God would have to originate "in a high place of mountainous region."⁴ As a member of the Council of Fifty Pratt had in fact done his part to insure the validity of this exegesis by participating in the organization of the government of the Kingdom of God in the Great Basin shortly after the Council had completed its task of directing the exodus. Young had insisted that if the Saints had ten years in the Rocky Mountains to set up the Kingdom they would not be rooted out. Yet even before that time was up, the "Lion of the Lord" had grown confident. In a

²Dan. 2:44-45.

³Millennial Star, XIX (1875), 630.

⁴Orson Pratt, Latter-Day Kingdom (Liverpool, 1856), p. 117.

sermon given in July, 1855, he boldly announced to his audience: "The Kingdom of God is actually organized and the inhabitants of the earth do not know it."⁵

Previous interpretations of the origin of Mormon government in the Great Basin either ignore or do not adequately take into account the activities of the Council of Fifty. Such influence was primary, and the politics and culture of Mormonism after 1845 cannot be fully understood without an appreciation of its significance. According to Franklin Daines, "for two years after the advent of the pioneers in the Great Basin, they had no need to consider any problems connected with the establishment of civil government."⁶ In Leland Creer's opinion, the Church met all governmental requirements. But the fact is that Mormon pioneers would have been greatly disturbed had they known of Creer's evaluation of their early government as a "pure theocracy."⁷ Even the first government in the

⁵Journal of Discourses, II (1855), 310. Italics mine.

⁶Franklin D. Daines, "Separatism in Utah, 1847-1870," Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1917 (Washington, 1920), p. 336.

⁷Creer, The Founding of an Empire, p. 310.

Salt Lake Valley, established on October 3, 1847, was not purely theocratic in its sanctions and functions. John Smith, who became president of the "municipal high council" in the valley, was a prominent member of the Council of Fifty. So were Charles C. Rich, the military commander, and Albert Carrington, clerk, historian, and deputy postmaster. These men, in accordance with the political theory of the Kingdom of God, derived their temporal authority from the Council of Fifty. At a council meeting held October 10, 1847, Parley P. Pratt pointed out that the laws made by the High Council were only temporary: "No one quorum has power to give eternal laws for this people but a greater council . . . may do this. . . . The council above named will regulate this matter as soon as they come up and sit."⁸ Thus, even in the early colonial period, the Mormons kept up at least a theoretical separation of church and state.

The High Council functioned as an executive, judicial, and legislative body until the autumn of 1848. By that

⁸Charles C. Rich, Journal, October 10, 1847, quoted in Hyrum L. Andrus, "Joseph Smith and the West," Brigham Young University Studies, II (1960), 146.

time, Brigham Young and most members of the Council of Fifty had settled permanently in the Rocky Mountains and begun to assume general direction of temporal affairs, although the High Council was not formally relieved of municipal duties until January 6, 1849.⁹ It is somewhat difficult to determine the exact date when the Council of Fifty took over the reins of government. The first record of a Council of Fifty meeting in the Salt Lake Valley is found in the diary of John D. Lee. An entry of December 9, 1848, states that "the Council of Y T F I F again met at the House of H. C. Kimball," indicating earlier meetings in Salt Lake City.¹⁰

In his study of the State of Deseret, Dale Morgan observed that a "council" organized itself into a legislature even before the formal establishment of the State of Deseret.¹¹ There can be no doubt that this was a reference to the Council of Fifty. Many years later,

⁹Journal History, January 20, 1849.

¹⁰Lee, A Mormon Chronicle, I, 80.

¹¹Morgan, "The State of Deseret," Utah Historical Quarterly, VIII (1940), p. 79.

Benjamin F. Johnson recalled that "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."¹²

The activities of the Council of Fifty during the winter of 1848-49 were far removed from ideas of world government but were crucial for the survival of the Saints in a hostile environment. The Council regulated the distribution of land, determined water rights, granted mill privileges, discussed the appropriateness of price control measures in the face of inflation, and legislated stray pen laws to keep the cattle under control. The Council dispatched members to operate ferries and selected plots for a cemetery. It levied taxes for the construction of roads, bridges, and other public works. Concerned with defending the Saints against possible intruders, the Council reorganized the Nauvoo Legion and appropriated funds for the construction of an arsenal. When, during the winter, food became scarce, the Council of Fifty

¹²Benjamin F. Johnson, My Life's Review (Independence, Mo., 1947), p. 124.

ascertained the amount of victuals available in the valley and assured their equitable distribution, threatening those unwilling to cooperate with the death penalty. John D. Lee recorded that "if those that have do not sell to those that have not, we will just take it & distribute among the poor and those that have and will not divide willingly may be thankful that their heads are not found wallowing in the snow."¹³

More important than all these measures, however, were the Council's deliberations on the political status of the Kingdom of God and its relation to the United States. On June 28, 1848, George A. Smith and Ezra T. Benson, both members of the Council of Fifty, discussed the alternatives open to the Mormons in a letter to Brigham Young. If the territory should be annexed by the United States, they considered the possibility of either becoming a state in the Union, or a territory.

¹³Lee, A Mormon Chronicle, I, 88; for more detailed descriptions of the activities of the Council of Fifty in this period see Andrus, Joseph Smith and World Government, pp. 90-108; Klaus J. Hansen, "The Theory and Practice of the Political Kingdom of God in Mormon History, 1829-1890" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1959), pp. 140-149.

But as we are in possession of the soil our destiny would be independence should Mexico maintain her old lines. We are not particularly in favor of either plan, but are willing to abide your better judgment, and are willing to use our humble endeavors to the utmost in carrying out any project you may desire for the establishing of the 'kingdom of God and his Laws'.¹⁴

Smith and Benson considered possible affiliation with the United States an expedient that would facilitate the transaction of business with the Federal government through Mormon agents "and thus save great expense and loss; but we go in, for once in all our life, if possible, to enjoy a breath of sweet liberty and independence."¹⁵ In a letter dated October 10, 1848, the two saints called the disadvantages of an affiliation with the United States to Young's attention. They pointed to Oregon as an example of how the government treated its territories, sending "a set of starved office seekers, hungry for a loaf from some quarter to be governor, judges and big men, irrespective of the feelings or rights of the hardy emigrants who had opened the country, made the roads, killed

¹⁴Journal History, June 26, 1848. It should be noted that the term "kingdom of God and his Laws" is identical with that used in the Minutes of the Council of Fifty in 1830.

¹⁵
Ibid.

the snakes, etc., etc."¹⁶ Liberty for the Kingdom of God, however, was possible only if the Mexicans could obtain modifications of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which indeed, they had refused to ratify in February, 1848. But this refusal was little more than a heroic gesture, and by the autumn of 1848 the Mormons knew that their territory had been annexed to the United States. As a result the establishment of the "Kingdom of God and His Laws" in an independent government had become unfeasible if not impossible. The saints had little choice but to seek affiliation with the United States.

On December 9, 1848, the Council of Fifty met at the house of Heber C. Kimball to deliberate on the advisability of petitioning Congress for a territorial government. It was agreed upon that such a government should only be requested with the understanding that the Mormons could choose their own officers. "Should they send such men as Lilburn Boggs, Neal, Gilliam Benton, King, William & others who were enemies of the Mormons," recorded John D. Lee, "we should send them Cross Letts to Hell, that dark &

¹⁶Journal History, October 10, 1848.

dreary Road where no traveler ever returns."¹⁷ All the officers of the proposed government were members of the Council of Fifty, with Brigham Young as governor. The Council drafted a petition to be signed by all the Mormons in the Great Salt Lake Valley. John M. Bernhisel was appointed to go to Washington and present the petition to Congress. When Bernhisel finally left for the national capital on May 3, 1849, the document had grown twenty two feet long, bearing 2,379 signatures.¹⁸

In the meantime, the Council of Fifty had proceeded to establish a civil government without the blessings of Congress. Contrary to Leland H. Creer, however, the Mormons were not "following well established precedents of frontier impatience and restlessness" in organizing the State of Deseret.¹⁹ The fact is that the Mormons had migrated to the Great Basin precisely for the purpose of setting up their own government. This government, then,

¹⁷Lee, A Mormon Chronicle, I, 89; Stout, December 5, 1848.

¹⁸Morgan, "The State of Deseret," p. 82.

¹⁹Creer, The Founding of an Empire, p. 313.

was only incidentally an adaptation to frontier conditions. Moreover, as the political theory of the Kingdom of God indicates, Mormon separatism was more than "the tendency to emphasize strongly the American principle of local self-government."²⁰ A commonly held opinion is that the State of Deseret was created by default, because the United States had not yet provided a government for the region, or because gold-seekers and other Gentiles required it.²¹ This is not the case. Had a government already existed in the area, the Mormons most likely would not have migrated there. Even if gold-seekers and other Gentiles had not come to the region, the Council of Fifty still would have set up a formal government.

The Council of Fifty established the State of Deseret in order to realize as many of the ideals of the political Kingdom of God as possible before affiliation with the United States. Only in this way could the Kingdom of God attain a degree of independence; and independence was one

²⁰Creer, Utah and the Nation, p. vii.

²¹Creer, The Founding of an Empire, p. 312; Andrew L. Neff, History of Utah, 1847-1869 (Salt Lake City, 1940), p. 108.

of the main goals of the Mormons. Shortly after the arrival of the first pioneer company in 1847, Norton Jacob quoted Brigham Young as saying:

A man may live here with us and worship what God he pleases or none at all, but he must not blaspheme the God of Israel or damn old Joe Smith or his religion, for we will salt him down in the lake. We do not intend to have any trade or commerce with the gentile world. For so long as we buy of them, we are in a degree dependent on them. The Kingdom of God cannot rise independent of the gentile nations until we produce, manufacture and make every article of use, convenience or necessity among our own people. . . . I am determined to cut every thread of this kind and live free and independent, untrammelled by any of their detestable customs and practices.²²

In 1849, Young realized that it would be impossible to cut the political threads with the United States; but he did his best to make those threads as thin and weak as possible. As a result he established the State of Deseret at a time when the Council of Fifty was in absolute political control of the Great Basin, so as to present the federal government with the accomplished fact of a kingdom of God before Gentiles could hamper its development.

²²Morgan, The Great Salt Lake, p. 202.

The Council of Fifty, in creating the State of Deseret, paid lip service to the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people and the democratic practices of a constitutional convention and free elections. Actually, the new government was formed through the highly centralized and autocratic control of its own organization. Significantly, all officers of the constitutional convention and all members of the various committees drafting the constitution were members of the Council. The fact that the constitution was read to the convention on March 8, 1849, only three days after the convention had opened its session on March 5, suggests that the document was framed after an already existing pattern, undoubtedly the constitution of the Kingdom of God. On March 10, the constitution was unanimously adopted by the convention.²³ This move was synonymous with ratification.

The constitution of the State of Deseret was either prima facie evidence of the disingenuousness of the Council of Fifty or of its inability to recognize the inherent

²³Morgan, "The State of Deseret," p. 84; Neff, History of Utah, p. 115.

contradiction of this democratic document with the manner in which it had been created and the conditions under which it would operate. It is quite possible that the framers of the constitution honestly believed that "all political power is inherent in the People," as stated in the preamble.²⁴ However, they may also have been aware of the favorable impression such a statement would create in Congress. Section two of the "Declaration of Rights" affirmed:

All political power is inherent in the people; and all free Governments are founded in their authority, and instituted for their benefit; Therefore, they have an inalienable and indefeasible [sic] right to institute Government; and to alter, reform, and totally change the same, when their safety, happiness, and the public good shall require it.²⁵

According to the political theory of the Kingdom of God, sovereignty rested not with the people but in the hands of the Deity. The expression of this sovereignty on earth was not the people but the Council of Fifty.²⁶

²⁴"Constitution of the State of Deseret," quoted in Morgan, "The State of Deseret," p. 156.

²⁵ibid., p. 162.

²⁶see above, pp. 77-86.

It is therefore not surprising that the constitution had hardly been adopted when it was already violated by the Council of Fifty. Since the Council was considered to be the "Living Constitution," such disregard for one merely established on paper was apparently believed to be no serious infraction. Article five of the new document provided for an election of a General Assembly and state officers on May 7, 1849.²⁷ This date, however, conflicted strangely with a decision of the Council of Fifty made on March 4, one day before the opening of the constitutional convention, providing for an election to be held on March 12, 1849, "for the purpose of electing the following men to fill the different Stations in office": Brigham Young, governor; Heber C. Kimball, chief justice; Willard Richards, secretary of state; Newel K. Whitney and John Taylor, associate justices; Horace S. Eldredge, marshal; Newel K. Whitney, treasurer; Albert Carrington, assessor and collector.²⁸ The election was held on March 12, as

²⁷"Constitution of the State of Deseret," quoted in Morgan, "The State of Deseret," p. 160.

²⁸Lee, A Mormon Chronicle, I, 99; Journal History, March 4, 1849.

planned by the Council of Fifty. Utah historian Andrew L. Neff remarked: "Everything had been cut and dried; . . . How to account for the duplicate procedure, and the inharmonious results is difficult to fathom, so slight is the record."²⁹ One possible explanation for the irregular procedure of the Council of Fifty is that it wanted to establish itself as a formal government as soon as possible, before its position could be weakened by outsiders. But why then did the Council incorporate another election date in the constitution of Deseret? The most logical explanation seems to be that it was done so as not to arouse the suspicions of the federal government. The election of March 12 was obviously too close to the ratification date of the constitution (March 10) to have allowed ample operation of the democratic process. After the admission of Deseret either as a territory or state into the Union the Mormons hopefully believed that they themselves would be in complete control. According to the preamble of its constitution, the government of Deseret was "Free and

²⁹History of Utah, p. 121.

Independent."³⁰ The Mormons saw no reason why in fact if not in theory it should not continue to be so. Once the formalities of affiliation with the United States had been taken care of the irregularities under which the Mormon government had been created needed no explanation.

The General Assembly of the State of Deseret, consisting of a Senate and a House of Representatives, convened for the first time on July 2, 1849. It is difficult to determine, however, how the legislators received their mandate. At the election on March 12, 655 votes were cast for state officers, but no record of an election for the legislature has so far been found. Indeed, it is quite likely that no election was held. Hosea Stout recorded in his diary that he was mystified by what procedure he had received his mandate.³¹ In view of the circumstances the most likely explanation is that the Council of Fifty simply hand-picked the assembly. The executive and judicial branches of the new government were filled entirely by

³⁰"Constitution of the State of Deseret," quoted in Morgan, "The State of Deseret," p. 157.

³¹Stout, July 2, 1849.

members of the Council of Fifty. This was not true of the General Assembly. Among its forty-five members, only twenty-seven belonged to the Council; thirteen of the sixteen members of the Senate held seats on the Council of Fifty; in the House, of twenty-nine representatives, fourteen belonged to the Council. There can be no question that the Council of Fifty was in complete control of the government, even in the House. Members of the Council controlled all important legislative committees, in keeping with a rule according to which members of the Council of Fifty served as chairmen of all committees to which they belonged.³² As far as the exercise of political control was concerned, the establishment of the State of Deseret was little more than a de jure confirmation of a de facto situation.

The General Assembly passed no legislation in its July session. This lack of urgency for providing civil laws and institutions is evidence that the Council of Fifty, as the living embodiment of the Law of God, effectively could control the temporal affairs of the Kingdom of God without the trappings of democracy. Not until its second

³²Lee, A Mormon Chronicle, I, 92.

session in December, 1849, did the Assembly conduct its first legislative business. Interestingly enough, these sessions, like those of the Council of Fifty, were held in Heber C. Kimball's school room.

Dale Morgan has studied the legislation of the General Assembly in detail; hence there is no need to recount it, with the exception of two ordinances that reveal the role of the Council of Fifty in a particular light.³³ One of these was the establishment of probate courts. The exact relationship of these courts to the Council of Fifty cannot be determined, but a combination of facts seems to indicate that the probate courts acted as the extended arm of the Council, administering the laws of the Kingdom of God on a local level. The probate judge himself had the greatest direct influence on county government in Deseret. It was his duty to choose the first officers of the county. In many ways, the functions of a probate judge in Deseret were comparable to those of a county commissioner. His position was non-elective, subject to appointment by the governor and the legislature. Since both the executive

³³Morgan, "The State of Deseret," pp. 96-113.

and legislative branches of government were controlled by the Council of Fifty, the Council, through the probate courts, could influence county government. After the establishment of the Utah Territory, the probate courts also assumed criminal jurisdiction to fill a temporary void created by the departure of the Gentile "runaway judges" in 1852. However, even after these unfriendly non-Mormons had been replaced by more sympathetic judges, the probate courts refused to yield their position of power to the district courts. Not until 1874, with the passing of the Poland Act, did the Council of Fifty lose this significant tool for controlling the political Kingdom of God.³⁴

Another act of the General Assembly of Deseret of special significance to the political Kingdom of God was an ordinance passed on September 14, 1850 which granted legal status to the Perpetual Emigrating Company. As mentioned previously, the doctrine of the gathering was of special significance for the establishment of the Kingdom of God. If the State of Deseret was to become a viable

³⁴James B. Allen, "The Development of County Government in the Territory of Utah, 1850-1896" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1956).

nation state, its population would have to expand at a rate considerably faster than natural increase would provide, even with the benefit of polygamy. Immigration, therefore, was one of the principal means for increasing the population of the Kingdom of God. As a result, the doctrine of the gathering was more strongly emphasized after the Saints had reached the Rocky Mountains than at any previous period in Mormon history. Since the Council of Fifty had directed the exodus it was only logical that it should continue its role of transplanting the elect to the new Zion. In September, 1849, Brigham Young "proposed the creation of a revolving fund for the purpose of helping the poor to reach Salt Lake."³⁵ The committee established to raise the necessary sum consisted entirely of members of the Council of Fifty. On September 7, 1850, Willard Snow, Edward Hunter, and Daniel Spencer of the Council of Fifty were appointed to direct the operations of the rotating fund, now named Perpetual Emigrating Fund. It was further decided to organize the fund into a company, chartered by the state. Consequently, Daniel H. Wells

³⁵Larson, Prelude to the Kingdom, p. 106.

introduced a bill to this effect on September 11. On September 14, the General Assembly of Deseret approved the charter. The following day, officers of the company were elected at a special conference of the Church. The six candidates for the directorship were all members of the Council of Fifty; needless to say, all six were elected.³⁶

Activities of this nature suggest that the separation of church and state in Deseret was more theoretical than real, confirming the observations made by Captain Howard Stansbury of the United States Topographical Engineers:

While there are all the external evidences of a government strictly temporal, it cannot be concealed that it is so intimately blended with the Church that it would be impossible to separate one from the other. This intimate connection of the church and state seems to pervade everything that is done. The supreme power in both being lodged in the hands of the same individuals, it is difficult to separate their two official characters and to determine whether in any one instance they act as spiritual or merely temporal officers.³⁷

³⁶Ibid., p. 127.

³⁷Howard Stansbury, An Expedition to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake (London, 1852), pp. 331-32.

The free and independent state of Deseret lasted for only two years. At the time the Mormons did not know this, but Deseret was to be the closest they would ever come to achieving an autonomous government of their own. Deseret was a monument to the national aspirations of the Latter-day Saints. Its area was truly vast, including within its ambitious boundaries all of Utah, most of Nevada and Arizona, substantial portions of Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico, sections of Idaho and Oregon, and almost half of California, with San Diego as a seaport.³⁸ A region of such dimensions was quite beyond the ability of the Mormons to police and settle within a reasonable time unless they expected a rapid influx of converts. Seen in this light, Mormon missionaries who extolled the virtues of the promised land to the working classes of Europe, especially in England, Scandinavia and Germany, were serving not only as agents of the Church but also the political Kingdom of God. Although Deseret never achieved the independent status of a nation state, it was well on its way to doing so. The Mormons knew that their freedom would not last,

³⁸"Constitution of the State of Deseret," quoted in Morgan, "The State of Deseret," p. 156.

but while they had it, they made the most of it. For two years, no strangers interfered in Deseret's internal affairs. In 1849, the state printed its own currency. In 1849 and 1850, it also coined its own money. The revived Nauvoo Legion served as its army of defense.³⁹

When Brigham Young and the Council of Fifty initiated steps to gain either territorial status or become a state of the Union they did so not because they loved the United States, but because they had no choice. If they had not initiated the move, Washington undoubtedly would have become suspicious and would have taken all necessary measures to ensure that a territory comprising about two thirds of the Mexican cession remained in the Union. The Council of Fifty, through its actions, revealed that it hoped to maintain as much control as possible while giving the appearance of fully cooperating with the government of the United States. The Council had already taken steps to gain territorial recognition for the new settlement in December, 1848. In May of 1849, John Bernhisel left for

³⁹Leonard J. Arrington, "Coin and Currency in Early Utah," Utah Historical Quarterly, XX (1952), 56-57.

Washington to carry out the instructions of the Council. With the organization of the State of Deseret, however, Young and the Council believed that the establishment of Deseret as a state in the Union might have some chance of approval in Congress. In a letter dated July 19, 1849, Brigham Young informed Orson Hyde at Kanesville, Iowa, of the creation of the state of Deseret, stating somewhat ingenuously that "we could not well await the tardy operations of the Federal Government without adopting some form suited to our present necessities."⁴⁰ Hyde was expected to cooperate with a new delegate, sent by the Council to obtain "our admission as a sovereign and Independent state into the Union upon an equal footing with the original states."⁴¹ This letter reveals that Young apparently realized that the doctrine of States' Rights, which had worked to the detriment of the Saints in Missouri and Illinois, could be used to great advantage in maintaining a considerable degree of independence for the political Kingdom of God in the Rocky Mountains. The clauses

⁴⁰ Journal History, July 19, 1849.

⁴¹ ibid.

"sovereign and independent" had much greater significance before the introduction of the fourteenth amendment into the Constitution of the United States. Had Deseret achieved statehood, the political control of the Council of Fifty quite possibly would have continued with little outside interference. With such hopes in mind, Almon Babbitt was sent to Washington to reverse Bernhisel's policy and direct every effort towards the recognition of statehood for Deseret.⁴² Frank Cannon's assertion that the Mormons attempted to gain admission to the Union in order to escape its authority, as paradoxical as this may sound, is thus basically correct.⁴³

Babbitt's mission, however, was not to be successful, although anti-Mormon sentiment in Congress at this time was negligible. But the sectional controversy over slavery

⁴²In the light of these events Leland Greer's recent interpretation that the Saints petitioned for a territorial government because they seemed to be "mistrustful of their application for a sovereign state government being favorably received" will have to be reversed. "The Evolution of Government in Early Utah," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXVI (1958), 37.

⁴³Frank J. Cannon and George L. Knapp, Brigham Young and His Mormon Empire (New York, 1913), p. 117.

worked just as effectively to frustrate Mormon hopes of obtaining statehood for Deseret. The southern bloc in Congress combined with northern advocates of popular sovereignty to relegate the Mormon kingdom to territorial status under the compromise of 1850.⁴⁴

In a special message to the General Assembly on March 8, 1851, Governor Young summarized the achievements of the State of Deseret: "We can ever carry with us the proud satisfaction of having erected . . . a peaceful, quiet, yet energetic government, under the benign auspices of which, unparalleled prosperity has showered her blessings upon every interest."⁴⁵ A month later, on April 5, the legislature of Deseret voted its own dissolution.

The Council of Fifty, of course, was disappointed over the failure of Deseret to obtain statehood. Still, if the Council could place its own officers into key territorial positions, "the Kingdom of God and His Laws"

⁴⁴Richard D. Poll, "The Mormon Question Enters National Politics, 1850-1856," Utah Historical Quarterly, LXV (1957), 117.

⁴⁵Deseret News, March 8, 1851.

would be in operation just as they had been in the State of Deseret. After the organic act creating the new territory was signed by President Millard Fillmore on September 9, 1850, John M. Bernhisel exerted all his efforts to secure appointment of his proposed list of territorial officers. The original instructions had called for suggesting Brigham Young as governor, Willard Richards as secretary, John Taylor as chief justice, Heber C. Kimball and Newel K. Whitney as associate justices, Daniel H. Wells as attorney general, and Joseph Heywood as marshall. All these men belonged to the Council of Fifty.⁴⁶ When Bernhisel, however, learned that legal training was required for the positions of chief justice and attorney general, he substituted the names of Zerubbabel Snow and Seth Blair who were so qualified but did not belong to the Council.⁴⁷ Bernhisel's influence with President Fillmore, however, did not prove sufficient. When news of the approval of the organic act reached Salt Lake City

⁴⁶Brigham H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City, 1930), III, 509-510.

⁴⁷Morgan, "The State of Deseret," pp. 130-31.

on January 27, 1851, the Mormons were disappointed to find that the Chief Justice, the two Associate Justices, and the Secretary of the Territory were to be Gentiles.⁴⁸

The Council of Fifty, to forestall interference in its operation by the Gentiles, organized the territorial government of Utah without the assistance of the newly appointed federal officers. On February 3, 1851, Daniel H. Wells, Chief Justice of the State of Deseret and member of the Council of Fifty, administered the oath of office to Brigham Young. When the federal officials arrived in the summer of 1851, the Mormons had already held a census. On August 4, they elected their legislature without the benefit of federal supervision. In this way they could assure that of the thirty-nine legislators elected from the various counties, at least twenty and possibly more would be members of the Council of Fifty.⁴⁹ Incensed over these irregularities, alleged Mormon disloyalty to the

⁴⁸Roberts, Comprehensive History, III, 501.

⁴⁹A reasonably accurate list of Council members can be compiled for 1849. Thereafter determination of membership becomes more difficult until the year 1880, for which a fully accurate list is available. See Appendix, p. 331.

United States, and polygamy, the federal officials left their posts and returned East.⁵⁰

Benjamin G. Ferris, who served as Gentile Secretary of Utah Territory shortly after these incidents, recorded that from 1851 on "the laws of the United States have been nominally in operation" but that the facts were quite otherwise.⁵¹ It is ironic that Ferris himself did not know the facts. He observed that the Mormon hierarchy was in complete political control, but he did not know how this was achieved. In fact, even at the present time the evidence on how the Council of Fifty ruled the Kingdom of God is largely circumstantial.

An examination of Utah territorial legislatures from 1851 to 1896 reveals that not until the 1870's when the influx of Gentiles into the territory in large numbers

⁵⁰Neff, History of Utah, pp. 168-177. U.S., President, 1850-53 (Fillmore), Message from the President of the United States Transmitting Information in Reference to the Condition of Affairs in the Territory of Utah, 34th Cong., 1st Sess., Executive Doc. No. 25.

⁵¹Benjamin G. Ferris, Utah and the Mormons (New York, 1856), p. 167.

began to crack Mormon political hegemony, did the Council of Fifty lose its political influence. Throughout this period it controlled key legislative committees. Council members, of course, frequently went abroad on church missions so that there was considerable fluctuation in the personnel controlling the government. Significantly, whenever a key member of the Council of Fifty returned from abroad, he immediately resumed an important position in the territorial government.⁵²

Since church members followed the advice of the hierarchy in matters both spiritual and temporal, the Council never had any difficulty in assuring election of its candidates. Nominations were made by leading church authorities; absence of the secret ballot assured that only the most recalcitrant would dare oppose the official slate. Stanley S. Ivins, in a study of eighteen annual elections from 1852-1870, observed that "of the 96,107 votes cast,

⁵²Determined by an examination of Territory of Utah "Journals of the Legislative Council and House of Representatives, 1851-1894" (microfilm, Utah State Historical Society). See also Everett L. Cooley (ed.), "Journals of the Legislative Assembly, Territory of Utah, Seventh Annual Session, 1857-1858," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXIV (1956), 107-122.

over this 18 year period, 96 per cent went to the regular candidate. And if the known Gentile ballots are eliminated, the percentage rises to 97.4."⁵³

Casting a vote in opposition to approved candidates was severely frowned upon, but was not in and of itself grounds for disciplinary action. Running for political office without church approval, however, was a much more serious matter. In the Mormon colony of San Bernardino, California, B. F. Grenard and F. M. Van Leuven were disfellowshipped for opposing the political counsel of church leaders by running for political office against other church members nominated by the authorities, who, incidentally, also happened to be members of the Council of Fifty.⁵⁴ Another case of wilful opposition to the political counsel of church leaders occurred in 1854. One of the candidates nominated as representative for Salt Lake County in the legislature, Albert P. Rockwood, had incurred the

⁵³Stanley S. Ivins, "The Moses Thatcher Case" (unpublished MS, Utah State Historical Society, n.d.), p. 3.

⁵⁴George William Beattie and Helen Pruitt Beattie, Heritage of the Valley. San Bernardino's First Century (Pasadena, Cal., 1939), p. 230.

dislike of a group of voters, who nominated a candidate of their own, Stephen H. Hales, in opposition. According to John Hyde, Jr., a Mormon apostate, Hales obtained the majority: "Stephen Hales was accordingly sent for by Brigham, who gave him a severe reprimand for daring to allow his name to be used as an opponent of 'the church nomination.'" Hales was compelled to resign, and Rockwood seated instead.⁵⁵ The most important fact of this incident, apparently unknown to Hales and his supporters, and to Hyde, was that Rockwood belonged to the Council of Fifty.

At times, the general Mormon populace, in ignorance of the desires of the hierarchy, put up their own candidate in good faith. Hosea Stout recorded in his diary on August 2, 1855 that he

. . . took stage and went to Davis County. The annual Election coming on next Monday the good people of Davis had brought their nominee for the Legislature. . . . My business to Davis was to have one of the nominees withdrawn and John D. Parker put on the track in his Place. Accordingly, I called the Bishop and other leading men together and laid the matter before them. The plan was

⁵⁵John Hyde, Jr., Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs (New York, 1857), p. 189. The incident is corroborated by Hosea Stout in his diary under the date of August 9, 1854.

adopted and A. Call withdrawn and Parker in his place, all to the most perfect satisfaction of all parties.⁵⁶

What Stout did not record was that although both Call and Parker were faithful church members, Call was most likely the more popular man, indicated by the fact of his nomination. But John D. Parker was a member of the Council of Fifty, having been personally ordained under the hands of Joseph Smith.

In view of these circumstances it is not surprising that voters were quite apathetic about exercising their franchise. When Elias Smith, member of the Council of Fifty and editor of the Deseret News, chastised his readers for their laxity in going to the polls, claiming ignorance of "how to account for the apathetic feeling that exists in Great Salt Lake County in regard to elections, as few of those having the right of franchise seldom exercise that privilege by going to the polls and voting for those they prefer for official stations within their gift" he was either hypocritical or utterly naive.⁵⁷

⁵⁶Stout, August 2, 1855.

⁵⁷Deseret News, November 7, 1860.

As a member of the elite that controlled the Kingdom of God, Elias Smith should have known better although it is quite possible that he clung to the fiction that Mormonism was an expression of the American political tradition and had thus persuaded himself that the Kingdom of God was not in fact controlled by an elite.⁵⁸ The idea of an elite, however, was openly proclaimed by Joseph Smith and sanctioned by Mormon scriptures. The notion of a spiritual aristocracy is expressed in the Pearl of Great Price. Abraham allegedly had a vision in which God had shown him

. . . the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; . . . and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.⁵⁹

Smith declared in a sermon that "every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before

⁵⁸There are, however, those who argue that even a democracy is run by an oligarchy. See John H. Schaar, Loyalty in America (Berkeley, Cal., 1957), p. 50.

⁵⁹Abraham, 3:22-23.

this world was. I suppose that I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council."⁶⁰ So, presumably, were the members of the Council of Fifty. Since the latter possessed the priesthood, the idea of a spiritual aristocracy could easily be transformed into the concept of a political and social elite.

According to what criteria were members of this elite selected? Leadership ability was one of the most important qualifications. The outstanding man in this category was Brigham Young. Others, such as Reynolds Cahoon, William Clayton, Benjamin F. Johnson, Orrin Porter Rockwell and John D. Lee owed their membership in the Council primarily to their unquestioned loyalty to Smith and Young. Almon Babbitt, though lacking in character and fortitude, provided the Council with the special services of a trained lawyer and an able diplomat. A few men were college graduates. Lorenzo Snow had gone to Oberlin College, Orson Spencer was a graduate of Union College, and John Bernhisel was an honor graduate of the University of Pennsylvania. In the later part of the nineteenth century family

⁶⁰History of the Church, VI, 364.

connection was of some importance, possible signifying a decline in the vigor of the organization. Four new members selected in 1867 were sons of members of the hierarchy; so were several new members chosen in 1880. Success in business may have influenced the selection of Horace Eldredge, the wealthiest Mormon merchant in Utah territory before the coming of the railroad. Angus Cannon and John W. Young were mining and railroad entrepreneurs. Both Abraham O. Smoot and Feramorz Little were mayors of Salt Lake City at the time of their initiation. On the other hand, John D. Lee, prominent in the Council, was a farmer. Philip B. Lewis worked as a tinmith. In fact Brigham Young more than Joseph Smith tried to obtain as wide a variety of skills and trades in the Council necessary to direct the economic development of the Kingdom of God. It can be deduced that those nine Mormons with an annual income of one thousand dollars or more belonged to the Council of Fifty.⁶¹ It is significant, however, that all others averaged incomes of less than a thousand dollars per year. Arrington comes to the conclusion that the "distribution

⁶¹Leonard J. Arrington, "Taxable Income in Utah, 1862-1872," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXIV (1956), 37.

of income in pre-1869 Utah was much more equal than that of the nation as a whole."⁶²

Of considerable interest is the ethnic origin of Council members. It has been possible to assemble a list of the names of 102 men belonging to the Council of Fifty between 1844 and 1890. On this list only one name, that of John M. Bernhisel, suggests origins outside of the British Isles and Ireland. Bernhisel, born in Pennsylvania, was of Swiss ancestry. Of the others, eighty-two can be traced positively to England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. At least eleven were foreign-born: seven in England, three in Canada, and one in Scotland. Thirty-three came from New England, eleven listed New York as their birthplace; three were born in Pennsylvania and Kentucky, two in Ohio, and one each in Maryland, New Jersey and Virginia. Seventeen were second-generation Normans born in Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, or Utah. It may be of significance that in spite of a strong influx of Scandinavian converts to Utah, and a lesser immigration of German and Swiss Mormons, none of these groups achieved

⁶²Ibid., pp. 42-43.

important positions of leadership in this period. On the other hand, some of the most forceful leaders in the Council, such as George O. Cannon and John Taylor, were born in England.

Precisely how many members of the Council of Fifty were polygamists could not be determined. In Nauvoo the percentage was small. But in Utah, there is no question that the majority practiced plural marriage. Of eighty-seven men identified as belonging to the Council of Fifty between 1847 and 1890, at least fifty-six practiced polygamy. Of the others, it is highly probable that only very few remained monogamous. The high percentage of polygamists among Council members supports the fact, openly admitted by Mormons, that plural marriage was a practice reserved primarily for the elite. The ratio of males practicing polygamy in Mormon society as a whole was only around ten per cent between 1846 and 1890.⁶³

⁶³Kimball Young, Isn't One Wife Enough? (New York, 1954), p. 444, is vague on how extensively polygamy was practiced, putting it "as high as 20 to 25 per cent of the male heads of families." More precise estimates are in Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, p. 238, and O'Dea, The Mormons, p. 246.

Since membership in the Council was for life (subject to good behavior), turnover of personnel was slow. Of the fifty-two men comprising the Council of Fifty in 1890, twenty-one had served since 1847 or earlier. Access to the seats of power, impossible to Gentiles without special dispensation by the Council, was thus severely restricted, even for Mormons. When Joseph Smith organized the Council of Fifty in 1844, it was essentially composed of bright, adventurous young men. By 1890, with few exceptions, the Council had turned into an assembly of patriarchs. In 1844, the average age of the Council was forty-two, with the median being around thirty-eight. In 1890, the average age was fifty-eight, the median being sixty-two. Among the numerous factors contributing to the decline of the Council towards the turn of the century, old age may have been an important one.

Active and vigorous men controlled the destinies of the Council during the formative years of the Kingdom of God in the Great Basin. Not only did they dominate territorial government, but they also supervised the colonization of the Kingdom, the development of its economic resources, and the establishment of schools and a University.

When Brigham Young, for example, sent a group of colonists to southern Utah in 1851 to establish an iron industry, John D. Lee, Apostle George A. Smith, and Philip B. Lewis, began construction of the new settlement in their authority as members of the Council of Fifty.⁶⁴ In the 1860's, the Council supervised the construction of telegraph lines and railroads.⁶⁵ The Deseret Express and Road Company, the Deseret Agricultural and Manufacturing Society, and the Deseret Iron Company are only representative examples of organizations that had members of the Council of Fifty on their boards of directors.⁶⁶ The editor of the Deseret News belonged to the Council of Fifty. So did the Territorial Superintendent of Schools until the Gentiles wrested control from the Mormons. Council members Orson Spencer and Orson Pratt lectured at the University of Deseret.

⁶⁴ Lee, "Journal of the Iron County Mission," Utah Historical Quarterly, XX (1952), 358.

⁶⁵ cited in Truth, "The Priesthood's Supremacy," II (1936), 22.

⁶⁶ Acts, Resolutions and Memorials passed at the Fifth Annual Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah (Great Salt Lake City, 1855), pp. 35-37, 235.

The paucity of information available on the Council of Fifty during the 1860's suggested to Leonard Arrington that the Council may have lost some of its influence during this period. Arrington acknowledged the important role played by the Council in "shaping Mormon economic policy during the first decade in Utah," but after that period, he maintained, it lost much of its influence. According to this historian the School of the Prophets, organized in 1867 as a means of economic defense against the influx of Gentiles, became the immediate successor to the Council of Fifty.⁶⁷ The discovery of further documentary evidence, however, proves beyond a doubt that the Council of Fifty continued in its role of leadership during the decade of the 1860's. On January 25, 1867, Brigham Young initiated eleven new members into the Council at a meeting held in the City Hall at Salt Lake City.⁶⁸

⁶⁷Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, pp. 245-51.

⁶⁸These were Robert T. Burton, Dr. Jeter Clinton, Edward Hunter, Charles Kimball, David P. Kimball, Parley P. Pratt, Jr., Joseph Rich, John Sharp, Abraham O. Sweet, Hosea Stout, and George J. Taylor. See History of Brigham Young, January 25, 1867 (MS in L.D.S. Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City).

The School of the Prophets was organized in December, 1867, almost a year after the Council had been invigorated by the addition of its new members. Although membership in the School of the Prophets was restricted to faithful holders of the Mormon priesthood, and admission to meetings was by card only, the very size of the new organization precluded its being a successor to the Council of Fifty. Arrington has estimated that "approximately 5,000 priesthood members belonged to various branch schools."⁶⁹ Not a school in the ordinary sense, the School of the Prophets was an assembly of community leaders holding the Mormon priesthood "in which theology, church government, and problems of church and community were discussed and appropriate action taken. . . . So far as its secular phase was concerned, the School of the Prophets resembled an economic planning conference."⁷⁰

Arrington summarized the "economic policies of the School of the Prophets--and the programs initiated for the purpose of bringing those policies into effect" as follows:

⁶⁹Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, p. 245.

⁷⁰Ibid.

The School sponsored a contract in the name of Brigham Young for construction of the Union Pacific Railroad through Utah Territory in order to prevent "5,000 or 6,000 Irish, German, and other laborers crowding through our peaceful vales."⁷¹ In order to make the Mormon community more self-sufficient, local cooperative enterprises were established, such as the Provo Woolen Mills and the Utah Manufacturing Company, the latter to produce agricultural machinery, carriages, and wagons. In order to make prices of these products competitive with those of the East the School decided on a substantial reduction in local wages. Success of Mormon industry depended largely on an effective transportation system. The financing of interior branch roads was handled largely by members of the School of the Prophets. Sales of products were to be channeled effectively through mercantile cooperatives buying their products from a wholesale house, Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institution, also established by the School. In order to prevent Gentile merchants from wrecking the cooperative system the School voted "that those who dealt with outsiders

⁷¹George Reynolds to George F. Gibbs, June 4, 1868, Millennial Star, XXX (1868), 443.

should be cut off from the Church."⁷² A serious problem confronting the Church after the completion of the trans-continental railroad in 1869 was the question of land titles. Mormon property rights were not confirmed by Congress until after the completion of the railroad. In order to prevent Gentiles from acquiring title to land on which Mormons had settled the School of the Prophets appointed a committee to gather information on the legal rights of the Mormons and to "report to the people what steps were necessary to take to preserve their homesteads being claimed by the railroad companies."⁷³ Finally, the School played a prominent part in a drive to raise money for the Perpetual Emigrating Fund by enjoining its members to observe the "Word of Wisdom," (a revelation by Joseph Smith indicating that Tobacco, alcoholic drinks, tea, and coffee were detrimental to the health of man) and to donate the money saved to the Fund.⁷⁴

⁷²Journal History, October 3, 1866.

⁷³Stout, March 20, 1869, in Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, p. 249.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 250. For the "Word of Wisdom," see Doctrine and Covenants, Section 89.

While the School of the Prophets unquestionably played the major role in carrying out these various policies and programs, there is some evidence that the policies themselves actually originated in the Council of Fifty. Council member Abraham O. Smoot reported to the Provo School of the Prophets that

. . . after conference the council of 50 met and while at the meeting it was proposed that we organize a Mercantile Cooperative Association--in the first place to start a wholesale store so that the necessities of the people may be supplied and not do as our merchants have in bringing such things that our people want and not necessities.⁷⁵

Speaking at a priesthood-meeting two days later, Smoot instructed his audience in the same manner: "Give the Co'operative system your influence and support, it is a measure concocted by the Council of Fifty as suggested by the President."⁷⁶ The construction of railroads, likewise, was decided upon in the Council of Fifty.⁷⁷ Whether or not the Council had a hand in planning the

⁷⁵"Minutes of the Provo School of the Prophets," October 13, 1868 (microfilm, Brigham Young University).

⁷⁶"Records of the Bishops' Meetings, Provo, 1868-1875," October 15, 1868 (microfilm, Brigham Young University).

⁷⁷Truth, II (1936), 22.

other enterprises mentioned above cannot be determined. But in view of the supervisory capacity of the Council it may safely be assumed that all these activities had the sanction of the Council; in fact, it is highly probable that the Council of Fifty organized the School of the Prophets in order to carry out a vast economic program that could not depend for its immediate supervision on a mere fifty men. The existence of other organizations, implementing the orders of the Council, seems only a logical assumption.

All these measures had one thing in common. They were designed to bring about economic independence for the Kingdom of God. The Council of Fifty furthermore believed material self-sufficiency to be one stepping stone to political independence, that ultimate goal for which its members worked so incessantly throughout the territorial period. Dissatisfied with territorial status, the Council repeatedly petitioned Congress for the admission of Deseret as a state into the federal Union as an alternative to independence. All these attempts were doomed

to failure.⁷⁸

The strong desire of the Saints to achieve independence for the Kingdom of God was vividly revealed when President James Buchanan sent his ill-starred Utah expedition to subdue the Mormons in 1857 for alleged rebellion. At that time, Brigham Young considered a complete break with the United States, thinking that the Lord had perhaps provided a means by which the Kingdom could achieve independence. In a speech on August 2, 1857, Young declared:

The time must come when there will be a separation between this kingdom and the kingdoms of this world. Even in every point of view, the time must come when this kingdom must be free and independent of all other kingdoms.

Are you prepared to have the thread cut today? . . . I shall take it as a witness that God desires to cut the thread between us and the world when an army undertakes to make their appearance in this Territory to chastise me or to destroy my life from the earth. . . . We will wait a little while to see; but I shall take a hostile move by our enemies as an evidence that it is time for the thread to be cut.⁷⁹

But the superior strength of Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston's troops and Brigham Young's good sense opened a wide

⁷⁸Stanley S. Ivins, "A Constitution for Utah," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXV (1957), 95-116.

⁷⁹Journal History, August 2, 1857.

interpretation to the term hostile move. The mediating efforts of Thomas L. Kane and the moderation and tact of the new Governor, Alfred Cumming, further convinced President Young that the Lord apparently did not want the thread cut at this particular time, and the conflict found a peaceful solution.

Young's speech, however, made it clear that ultimately the political Kingdom of God was bound to achieve independence. But if the Lord would indicate to the Saints when the propitious moment for cutting the thread with the world had come they must be prepared. They must gird themselves for the time when the political Kingdom of God could send its accredited ambassadors abroad.

The outbreak of the Civil War seemed to portend the speedy consummation of these hopes. Joseph Smith himself had predicted that war, beginning in South Carolina, would envelop the earth and lead to the "full end of all nations."⁸⁰ The destruction to be poured out over the United States was to be a punishment for her failure to redress

⁸⁰Doctrine and Covenants, Section 87.

the wrongs committed against the Saints. Such failure, predicted the Prophet Joseph, would result in the utter destruction of the government. "Not so much as a potsherd would be left."⁸¹ Remembering these prophecies, church leaders predicted the inevitability of conflict even before the outbreak of hostilities. Anti-Mormon writers charged the Mormons with desiring a confederate victory. What the Saints really seem to have hoped for, at least during the beginning of the war, was a mutual destruction of both sides. Such expectations found expression in the diary of Charles Walker who, in 1861, wrote:

The Virginians are preparing to seize the capital at Washington, and where it will end they know not, but the Saints know and understand it all. . . . Bro. Brigham spoke of the things in the East said he hoped they would both gain the victory said he had as much sympathy for them as the Gods and Angels had for the Devils in Hell.⁸²

But whatever the rhetorical expressions of the Mormons and their leaders, no openly hostile actions towards the government occurred. The Saints assumed a waiting attitude;

⁸¹History of the Church, V, 394.

⁸²Charles Walker, Diary (typed copy of original, Brigham Young University), I, 225.

if the Lord saw fit to permit the destruction of the United States they would be ready to take over. Declared Heber C. Kimball: "We shall never secede from the Constitution of the United States. We shall not stop on the way of progress, but we shall make preparations for future events. . . . God will make the people free as fast as we are able to bear it."⁸³

In keeping with this idea of preparedness, the Council of Fifty held itself in readiness to take over when other earthly governments would have crumbled. After it had failed to obtain statehood for its revived state of Deseret in 1862, the Council nevertheless continued the state organization in the enigmatic meetings of the so-called ghost legislature of Deseret which convened the day after the close of each session of the territorial legislature during the 1860's. A private message given to this "legislature" by Brigham Young in 1863 reveals its nature and its purpose:

Many may not be able to tell why we are in this capacity. I do not think that you see this thing as it is. Our organization will be kept up.

⁸³Deseret News, May 1, 1861.

We may not do much at present in this capacity, yet what we have done or shall do will have its effect. . . . This body of men will give laws to the nations of the earth. We meet here in our second Annual Legislature, and I do not care whether you pass any laws this Session or not, but I do not wish you to lose one inch of ground you have gained in your organization, but hold fast to it, for this is the Kingdom of God. . . . We are called the State Legislature, but when the time comes, we shall be called the Kingdom of God. Our government is going to pieces, and it will be like water that is split upon the ground that cannot be gathered. . . . I do not care whether you sit one day or not. But I do not want you to lose any part of this Government which you have organized. For the time will come when we will give laws to the nations of the earth. Joseph Smith organized this government before, in Nauvoo, and he said if we did our duty, we should prevail over all our enemies. We should get all things ready, and when the time comes, we should let the water on the wheel and start the machine in motion.⁸⁴

But with the victorious emergence of the Union from the Civil War the Council of Fifty had to find other ways of establishing the Kingdom. The ghost of Deseret nevertheless lingered on until 1870, when it quietly expired. There seemed to be no need for keeping the wheel in working order when water apparently was nowhere in sight.

The Mormons, however, did not give up hope entirely. Even after the passing of the Fourteenth Amendment, Brigham

⁸⁴Journal History, January 19, 1863.

Young considered statehood preferable to territorial status. In 1874 he gave some of his reasons for wanting statehood for the Kingdom of God: "We regret that we are not in a capacity to make our own laws pertaining to our domestic affairs as we choose; if we were in a State capacity we could do so. . . . But we can not do this now, we are not a State--We are in the capacity of servants now."⁸⁵ With the influx of Gentiles into the territory after the completion of the railroad it became doubtful, however, that statehood would give the Council of Fifty the opportunity to enact the laws of the Kingdom of God. At a constitutional convention held in 1872, Gentiles were able to exert their influence for the first time. Significantly, the draft of the new constitution departed extensively from its earlier models. The same was true of the constitutional drafts of 1862 and 1867, neither of which Congress accepted as evidence that the Mormons were giving up polygamy and political control of the territory, these being the chief obstacles for Utah's admission to the Union as a state. When Congress granted statehood to Utah in 1896

⁸⁵Journal of Discourses, XVII (1875), 157.

it was with an unwritten understanding that polygamy was no longer practiced by Latter-day Saints, and that the Mormon hierarchy had ceased exercising control over the temporal affairs of the Kingdom of God.

That the radical transformation of Mormon society implied in such measures could not have been effected without a major struggle seems self-evident. The political Kingdom of God had been one of the chief targets of Gentiles for over half a century. The Saints had suffered immensely in behalf of its defense. Only by demonstrating that the political Kingdom of God was a major cause for Mormon-Gentile conflict will it be possible to understand why the Saints struggled so fiercely in behalf of the political Kingdom and were at the same time greatly relieved when they were no longer called upon to defend an institution that by 1896 had outlived its usefulness.

CHAPTER VII

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN CONFLICT WITH THE WORLD

On the afternoon of October 30, 1838, there occurred one of the most brutal butcheries of men and children in the annals of the state of Missouri. According to one of the survivors, Joseph Young, "a large company of armed men, on horses" advanced towards the flour mill of Jacob Haun on Shoal Creek, where about thirty Mormon families had gathered for refuge. Defenseless, the Saints scattered, some into the woods, others into a blacksmith shop. Overtaken by the mob, seventeen men and boys were killed, fifteen wounded. Even nine year old Sardius Smith, who had sought refuge under a bellows, was dispatched with a gun-blast in the head. Boasted the butcher afterwards: "Nits will make lice, and if he had lived he would have become a Mormon."¹

¹Quoted in William A. Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen, Among the Mormons (New York, 1958), p. 103.

The shots of the Haun's Mill massacre were to keep echoing in the ears of the Saints, reminding them that Satan was fighting with real bullets against the Kingdom of God. The Mormons knew that Christ's kingdom was not to be of this world, but they believed fervently that it was to be very much in it. They also knew that as a result they would have to expect persecution. Yet, understandably, it was difficult to accept and to bear. The massacre at Haun's Mill became a symbol seared indelibly on the memory not only of the immediate participants but also vicariously on all the Saints. It became a symbol for the persecutions that began shortly after the publication of Joseph Smith's first revelation, that led to the death of the Mormon Prophet in 1844 at the hands of assassins, and that pursued the Saints relentlessly even into the recesses of the "everlasting mountains" in the Great Basin.

Why did the Mormons, throughout the nineteenth century, experience such harrowing persecutions? This question, indeed, is one of the most frequently asked about Mormon history.

The Saints themselves found a simple and straightforward answer to this question. Joseph Smith had made it clear that "the influence of the devil and his servants will be used against the kingdom of God."² In fact, if Mormonism was the work of God, then Satan had no choice but to oppose it with all the means at his disposal. Persecution, therefore, became one of the touchstones for the divinity of Mormonism; the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church.

Satan might for a time impede the progress of the Kingdom of God, but in the end, the Saints would triumph. The temporary success of the forces of evil was an indication that the Saints had not sufficiently purified themselves: "I, the Lord, have suffered the affliction to come upon them, wherewith they have been afflicted, in consequence of their transgressions; . . . because they did not hearken altogether unto the precepts and commandments which I gave unto them."³ Another reason why the Saints were "being driven and smitten by the hands of . . .

²History of the Church, VI, 366.

³Doctrine and Covenants, 103:4.

[their] enemies" was that God had "suffered them thus far, that they might fill up the measure of their iniquities, that their cup might be full" justifying the Lord in pouring out over the enemies of the Kingdom of God "my wrath without measure in mine own time."⁴

Although Mormon apologists have searched for more objective reasons to explain the persecutions suffered by the Saints, their ultimate conclusions are not too far removed from those of the early Mormons. There is a general consensus of opinion among the apologists that the persecutions were primarily a result of Gentile prejudice against the Mormon religion.⁵ The Mormon-Gentile conflict presumably revealed more about the persecutors than about those being persecuted.⁶ There is no question that Gentile

⁴Ibid., 103:2-3.

⁵See Richard L. Bushman, "Mormon Persecutions in Missouri, 1833," Brigham Young University Studies, III (1960), 20; Mark Cannon, "George O. Cannon," p. 37; Creer, Utah and the Nation, pp. vii, 13-14.

⁶Mark W. Cannon, "The Crusades Against the Masons, Catholics, and Mormons: Separate Waves of a Common Current," Brigham Young University Studies, III (1961), 23-40; for another treatment of this same topic by a non-Mormon, see David Erion Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-subversion: An

hatred of the Mormons is a fruitful area for an investigation of aberrations of mass psychology; it is true that intolerance of Mormons can be compared with instances of the mass hysteria and persecution that marked American social history in other eras. Yet the burden of responsibility must not be placed, in the fashion of the apologists, entirely on the Gentiles. What the apologists have done is to project twentieth-century Mormon values and practices into the nineteenth century. They understandably can see no reason why anybody would want to persecute them. Neither can they concede this possibility to their ancestors. Consequently in the eyes of the apologists the cessation of conflict is primarily evidence of a matured American society willing to accept the religious peculiarities of Mormonism. What the apologists do not want to admit is that Mormonism itself had to undergo fundamental changes in order to make possible its acceptance by society at large. Even the defenders of Mormonism, however, cannot ignore the fact that polygamy was abolished in 1890. But

Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLVII (1960), 205-224.

they portray this change as being superficial, in no way affecting the fundamental values of Mormonism. Yet polygamy became the primary target through which Gentiles could strike at one of the most fundamental institutions of nineteenth-century Mormonism, the political Kingdom of God. It was the final decision of church leaders to postpone attempts to establish this kingdom to an undetermined future that marked the extensive underlying change which has affected Mormon society since the turn of the century, and which has made it not only acceptable but eminently respectable in twentieth-century America. As long as the Saints, however, asserted all their efforts towards the realization of a temporal kingdom of God on earth, conflict with their environment was inevitable. One enemy of the Saints asked the pointed question that if the Mormons were entirely the victims of the ill will of their neighbors "why have they come into violent conflict with the people in all their seven places of settlement? For they have tried every different kind of people, from New York, through Ohio, Illinois, and Missouri, to Salt Lake. Are all the people of all these places incurably vicious, mobbers and

trespassers on religious right?"⁷ Anti-Mormon writer J. H. Beadle thought he had an obvious answer. The Mormons had brought about the persecutions themselves by incorporating their economic, social, and political ideas and practices within their religion. The Saints insisted that the First Amendment gave them the right to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience and claimed that their enemies were depriving them of their freedom of religion, thus returning one of the chief arguments of the Gentiles, that Mormonism was un-American, with the retort that violation of the First Amendment was certainly equally as unbecoming of Americans. The Gentiles, therefore, tried to argue that Mormonism was more than a religion. Mormon apostate John Hyde, for instance, declared that "as a religion, Mormonism cannot be meddled with; as a civil polity it may."⁸

The Saints of course disagreed with this interpretation, but they did occasionally admit that kingdom building was a

⁷John A. Beadle, in Hickman, Brigham's Destroying Angel, p. 15.

⁸John Hyde, Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs (New York, 1857), pp. 307-308.

major cause for persecution. Edward W. Tullidge wrote in the Millennial Star as follows:

It is because there has, day after day, and year after year, grown up and fast spread in America a realization, and with it a fear of the empire-founding character of "Mormonism" and the "Mormons," that this Church has such heartrending pages in its history. It is because of the growth of this presentiment and fear that a Joseph, a Hyrum, a Parley, a David Patten, and many others of the chief Elders and Saints have been directly or indirectly martyred.⁹

Even before the temporal claims of the Mormons had caused disturbances with the Gentiles, Smith's insistence on leadership in both spiritual and temporal matters had caused some internal difficulties in the Church. T. B. H. Stenhouse claims that "as early as the second year of the Church some of the leading elders of Zion (in Missouri) were accusing Brother Joseph in rather an indirect way of seeking after monarchical power and authority."¹⁰

Refusal to acknowledge the authorities of the Church in temporal matters played an important role in the excommunication of Oliver Cowdery, who had been Smith's closest

⁹Millennial Star, XXIII (1861), 125.

¹⁰T. B. H. Stenhouse, The Rocky Mountain Saints (New York, 1873), p. 3.

associate in the most formative period of Mormonism and had been designated as "Second Elder" in the Church. Answering charges "for virtually denying the faith by declaring that he would not be governed by any ecclesiastical authority or revelations whatever in his temporal affairs,"¹¹ Cowdery asserted:

The very principle of . . . [ecclesiastical authority in temporal affairs] I conceive to be couched in an attempt to set up a kind of petty government, controlled and dictated by ecclesiastical influence, in the midst of this national and state government. You will, no doubt, say this is not correct; but the bare notice of these charges, over which you assume a right to decide is, in my opinion, a direct attempt to make the secular power subservient to church direction--to the correctness of which I cannot in conscience subscribe--I believe that the principle never did fail to produce anarchy and confusion.¹²

Even greater anarchy and confusion was caused by Mormon attempts to set up a temporal kingdom of God in Missouri. In the autumn of 1838, the hostilities between Mormons and Gentiles broke out into open warfare. On October 25, a battle was fought between a Missouri mob and

¹¹Roberts, Comprehensive History of the Church, I, 431-32.

¹²quoted in ibid., p. 433.

about seventy-five Mormons on Crooked River. Five days later occurred the massacre at Haun's Mill. Shortly after these outrages, Joseph Smith and his associates were brought to trial, while the Missourians went free. Judge Austin A. King conducted the trial in a very biased manner. Any Mormon witness sought by the defense in behalf of Smith was immediately hunted down and arrested. As a result, the testimony given at the trial was offered by enemies of the Mormons or personal enemies of Smith, including a number of apostates. But although such testimony has to be viewed with considerable caution, it cannot be discounted entirely, especially in view of Smith's subsequent endeavors in behalf of the political Kingdom of God. The evidence of the apostates, in fact, reveals how far Smith had attempted to go in establishing the Kingdom. Thomas B. Marsh, a former apostle who was reinstated in the Church in Nauvoo, testified: "The plan of said Smith, the prophet, is to take this State; and he professes to his people to intend taking the United States, and ultimately the whole world. This is the belief of the church,

and my own opinion of the prophet's plans and intentions."¹³ George M. Hinckle asserted that

. . . the general teachings of the presidency were, that the kingdom they were setting up was a temporal as well as a spiritual kingdom; that it was the little stone spoken of by Daniel. Until lately, the teachings of the church appeared to be peaceable, and that the kingdom was to be set up peaceably; but lately a different idea has been advanced--that the time had come when this kingdom was to be set up by forcible means, if necessary.¹⁴

Such statements grossly distorted the means by which Smith hoped to establish the Kingdom of God. But the fact that he did, indeed, dream of setting up the political Kingdom of God he could not deny. In his personal history, Smith recorded that "our Church organization was converted, by the testimony of the apostates, into a temporal kingdom, which was to fill the whole earth, and subdue all other kingdoms."¹⁵ The Prophet implied that this testimony was false, and so, technically, it was. But what Smith failed

¹³Quoted in Samuel M. Smucker, The Religious, Social, and Political History of the Mormons, or Latter-day Saints, from their Origin to the Present Time (New York, 1860), pp. 108-109.

¹⁴U.S., Congress, Senate, Testimony in Trial of Joseph Smith, Jr., for High Treason, 26th Cong., 2d Sess., 1841, Senate Doc. 189, p. 23.

¹⁵History of the Church, III, 211.

to confide to his history (which he was very much aware he was writing as a public record for posterity) was that he believed in a distinction between the Church and the political Kingdom of God, and that the latter was "to fill the whole earth, and subdue all other kingdoms." The expulsion of the Saints from Missouri was therefore primarily a result of their attempts to establish the political Kingdom of God.

This was also the primary reason why the Mormons were forced to leave Illinois, and why Smith was murdered in 1844. When the Mormon Prophet organized the Council of Fifty in Nauvoo under strictest secrecy, he must have been rather too optimistic a judge of human nature to expect sealed lips at a time when close associates were becoming enemies overnight. It was thus only to be expected that rumors of the secret council and its doings would soon circulate in Nauvoo and spread among friend and foe alike. These rumors and half truths gave to the political Kingdom of God, in the eyes of Gentiles and apostates, the aspect of the sinister and the subversive. The opposition that led directly to the assassination of the Prophet was partly caused by rumors that the Mormons were planning to overthrow

the government when they got strong enough, and to take possession of the country--rumors that seemed to confirm John C. Bennett's revelations that Smith planned to establish a Mormon empire in the Middle West. Governor Thomas Ford, who claimed that he had spies both among the Mormons and their enemies, reveals in his History of Illinois that he had learned some of the important secrets connected with the political Kingdom of God, albeit in distorted form:

It seems, from the best information that could be got from the best men who had seceded from the Mormon Church, that Joe Smith about this time conceived the idea of making himself a temporal prince as well as spiritual leader of his people. He instituted a new and select order of the priesthood, the members of which were to be priests and kings temporally and spiritually. These were to be his nobility, who were to be the upholders of his throne. He caused himself to be crowned and anointed king and priest, far above the rest; and he prescribed the form of an oath of allegiance to himself, which he administered to his principal followers. To uphold his pretensions to royalty, he deduced his descent by an unbroken chain from Joseph the son of Jacob, and that of his wife from some other renowned personage of Old Testament history. The Mormons openly denounced the government of the United States as utterly corrupt, and as being about to pass away, and to be replaced by the government of God, to be administered by his servant Joseph.¹⁶

¹⁶History of the Church, III, 211.

If such rumors implied that Smith was engaged in treasonable activities, some of his former associates were more direct in their charges. Wilson Law, after his excommunication, made an attempt to obtain a warrant against Joseph Smith for treason on the grounds that on one occasion, while listening to the Prophet preaching from Daniel 1:44, he had heard him declare "that the kingdom referred to was already set up, and that he was the King over it."¹⁷ Almost identical charges were levelled against the Prophet in the Nauvoo Expositor.¹⁸

The Expositor allegations and the subsequent reaction triggered the immediate events leading to the death of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum. The affair has been recounted many times and does not bear repetition. None of these accounts, however, take into consideration the existence of the Council of Fifty in Nauvoo in 1844; yet an understanding of its role provides a new dimension to understanding the causes of the death of the Smith brothers.

¹⁷Millennial Star, XLIV (1862), 359.

¹⁸A copy of this rare document can be found at the Brigham Young University Library.

The Expositor was a newspaper started by a group of disgruntled Mormons under the leadership of Dr. Robert D. Foster, who put up most of the money for the press, and William Law, Second Counselor to Joseph Smith for over two years. Law was firmly convinced of the validity of Mormon doctrine. By April of 1844, he was equally certain that Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet. The rift between Smith and Law had its origins in the Prophet's authoritarian insistence upon managing all temporal affairs of the Saints, including those of William Law. The Second Counselor, however, avoided an open break with Smith until he learned of the doctrine of polygamy. Dr. Foster, likewise, broke with the Prophet over this same doctrine. Smith had set April 20 as the date for Foster's church trial. Foster, however, intended to use the trial as a platform to condemn the Prophet. In order to prevent such a possibility, a secret council excommunicated Foster along with William, Wilson, and Jane Law "for unchristianlike conduct."¹⁹ It is of considerable interest that of the thirty-two persons present at this meeting, twenty-two can be identified as

¹⁹History of the Church, VI, 341.

members of the Council of Fifty.

Why should the Council of Fifty take such a special interest in a church trial? That its concern was warranted is indicated by the aims of Law and Foster. Law was more dangerous than apostates like John C. Bennett because he still believed in Mormonism. Law organized a church of his own designed to reform the church of Joseph Smith. It was with this purpose in mind that he started his newspaper in order to "expose" the alleged malpractices of Smith and his fol:State College Studiesre, one of Law's disciples, wrote a letter to the editor of the Warsaw Signal telling of the forthcoming edition of the Expositor. The paper was to be an expose of Smith's "Mormon Seraglio a/nd/ Nauvoo Harem" Nauvoo Harem; and his unparalleled and unheard of attempts at seduction."²⁰ Most writers have emphasized this aspect of the affair. Higbee, however, noted that the edition was to be "fraught with Joe's peculiar and particular mode of Legislation--and a dissertation upon his delectable plan

²⁰George R. Gayler, "The 'Expositor' Affair. Prelude to the Downfall of Joseph Smith," The Northwest Missouri State College Studies, XXV (1961), 6-7.

of government."²¹ Was Higbee referring to the Council of Fifty and its ambition to set up a political kingdom of God? Had the apostates learned important secrets concerning the Council of Fifty?

A number of reasons support this assumption. In a prospectus the publishers proclaimed it their "sacred duty . . . to advocate unmitigated DISOBEDIENCE TO POLITICAL REVELATIONS, and to censure and decry gross moral imperfections wherever found, either in the plebeian, patrician or SELF-CONSTITUTED MONARCH."²² When the first and only issue of the Expositor came off the press on June 7, 1844, it contained the significant passage: "We will not acknowledge any man as king or lawgiver to the church." These allusions suggest that the apostates must have had at least some knowledge of ideas and practices connected with the Council of Fifty. If the spectacular news of Smith's kingship could reach Governor Ford, it seems likely that it could also reach those who were even closer to the scene. The objection to Smith as lawgiver is less

²¹Ibid.

²²History of the Church, VI, 443.

spectacular but even more significant. It suggests that Law, Foster, and their associates must have had at least a rudimentary knowledge of "The Kingdom of God and His Laws;" their objection to Smith as lawgiver in an ecclesiastical sense would not have been logical as long as they accepted the revelations providing the foundation for the Church; these Law and Foster did not reject. The paper also contained a strong condemnation of polygamy, with hints of further revelations on the subject in future issues.

The publication of the Expositor put Smith in a serious dilemma. If he did not stop its publication, the secrets of polygamy and of the Council of Fifty would throw the Church into confusion and cause serious repercussions from the Gentiles. If he closed it down, he faced charges of suppression of the freedom of the press.

Smith quickly decided that the press was guilty of libel and had to be silenced. For this purpose he convened the Nauvoo City Council, and in a trial without lawyers, witnesses, or jury had the Expositor declared a civic nuisance and ordered destroyed. Members of the Nauvoo

Legion smashed the press and burned all issues of the paper they could find.

There is no question that in destroying the press Smith had overstepped both his authority and the bounds of propriety. Yet the public indignation was out of all proportion to the outrage committed. The Mormons could not help but remember the lack of public concern over their own tribulations in Missouri. In fact, Gentile indignation was not only caused by a somewhat hypocritical concern for free speech. The destruction of the press provided the Gentiles with an opportunity to vent their hatred for the Mormons which had built up for some time. On June 12, 1844, the Warsaw Signal wrote:

We have only to state that this is sufficient!
 War and extermination is inevitable! CITIZENS
 ARISE, ONE and ALL!! Can you stand by, and suf-
 fer such INFERNAL DEVILS! to ROB men of their
 property right, without avenging them? We have
 no time to comment! Every man will his own. LET
 IT BE POWDER AND BALL!!²³

For Joseph and Hyrum, powder and ball it was indeed. When Governor Ford learned of the destruction of the Expositor, he went to Carthage demanding that Smith and all others

²³quoted in Gayler, "The 'Expositor' Affair," p. 12.

involved in the incident stand trial in that town. Although Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum hesitated to submit to Ford's demands and even crossed into Iowa to escape to the Rocky Mountains, they finally went to Carthage, believing that the Gentiles would otherwise ravage the City of Nauvoo. They went with the heavy foreboding that they would not live to see Nauvoo again. Their premonitions were tragically accurate. On June 27, 1844, the Prophet and his brother became martyrs to the cause of the Kingdom of God.

It is the consensus of historians that had Smith handled the Expositor affair with more caution he and his brother would not have died at Carthage. George Gayler speaks for most historians who have written on the subject: "It cannot be doubted that the destruction of the press of the Nauvoo Expositor was the most serious blunder committed by the Mormons since their arrival in Illinois four and a half years previously."²⁴ B. H. Roberts, however, differs from this interpretation. He admits that the destruction of the press was illegal, but a matter of

²⁴Ibid., p. 11; see also Inez Smith Davis, The Story of the Church, p. 335: "The Saints never did a more unwise thing than order the destruction of the Expositor."

expediency, and under the circumstances essential for the survival of the Mormons in Illinois.²⁵ Roberts, however, bases his evaluation on the assumption that the Gentiles would have believed what he considered to be the slanderous statements made in the Expositor. But given the existence of the Council of Fifty and the concept of the political Kingdom of God it now appears that many of these charges, however distorted they appeared in the newspaper, had a basis in fact. It seems quite likely, therefore, that the destruction of the press was a greater necessity than even Roberts concedes. The Prophet was faced with a kind of Hobson's choice, in which he viewed destruction of the press as perhaps the lesser of two evils. It is not unreasonable to affirm that destruction of the Expositor was the correct decision, even though it resulted in personal tragedy. Had Smith lived and allowed the apostates to publish their allegations the pent up fury of the Gentiles might have precipitated a repetition of the events that drove the Mormons from Missouri in 1839. Had this happened, the exodus to the West would have occurred under

²⁵ In History of the Church, VI, xxxvii-xxxix.

possibly disastrous circumstances; the Saints might have been forced to migrate without necessary provisions or equipment. As it was, the death of Joseph and Hyrum Smith temporarily stilled the furor of the bigots of Western Illinois. When the conflict between Gentiles and Mormons revived to the point where removal to the Rocky Mountains became a matter of survival for the Saints, Brigham Young and the Council of Fifty had had sufficient time to prepare for an orderly migration. Through his death, Smith might well have been the savior of his people.

Although the death of Joseph Smith temporarily calmed the tension between the Mormons and their neighbors, the existence of the political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty continued to be a cause for apprehension on the part of Gentiles and apostates. In a writ issued for the arrest of prominent citizens of Nauvoo for "treasonable designs against the state," mention was made of a private council of which the accused supposedly were members. Whoever originated the complaint must have had some information regarding the Council, for six of the seven persons mentioned in the complaint belonged to the Council of

Fifty.²⁶ In the summer of 1845, John S. Fullmer, while on a mission for the Council of Fifty, reported:

The apostates are trying to get up an influence with the president of the United States to prevent the saints emigrating westward, and that they have written to the president informing him of the resolutions of the General Council [Council of Fifty] [sic] to move westward, and representing that Council guilty of treason, etc.²⁷

As subjective a term as treason, however, leaves wide room for interpretation. The Polk administration chose to construe it broadly and even allowed five-hundred Mormons to enlist in a battalion under General Stephen Watts Kearny, if with some misgivings. The Mormons vehemently denied such charges by making a semantic distinction in their minds between loyalty to the institutions of the United States, and fealty to the government. Words that must have sounded treasonable to Gentile ears might readily have been uttered by Mormons who regarded themselves as exemplary patriots. Understandably, enemies of Mormonism refused to accept semantic distinctions. Soon after their arrival in the Great Basin, the saints made the painful

²⁶Ibid., VII, 444.

²⁷Ibid., p. 498.

discovery that mountains, desert, and vast expanses of sagebrush proved little more protection than semantics. Consequently, controversy followed the Saints to their refuge. Only too soon, the halls of Congress would resound with the echoes of conflict from the "everlasting mountains" and continue to reverberate until the political dreams of a Mormon empire were crushed.

The opposition which the Kingdom of God was to encounter in its new Zion was foreshadowed by a petition referred to the Committee on Territories of the United States Senate on December 31, 1849. This letter was signed by none other than William Smith, brother of Joseph and former member of the Council of Fifty who had joined apostate James Strang's kingdom on Beaver Island in Lake Michigan. Protesting "against the admission of the Salt Lake Mormons into the Union as a State," Smith insisted that

. . . Salt Lake Mormonism is diametrically in opposition to the pure principles of virtue, liberty, and equality, and that the rulers of the Salt Lake Church are bitter and inveterate enemies of our government. They entertain treasonable designs against the liberties of American freeborn sons and daughters of freedom. They have elected Brigham Young, (who is the president of their church) to be the Governor of the proposed State of Deseret. Their intention

is to unite church and state and whilst the political power of the Roman pontiff is passing away, the American tyrant is endeavoring to establish a new order of political popery in the recesses of the mountains of America.²⁸

At the time members of Congress paid little attention to these charges, being involved in hammering out the compromise of 1850. But as the years progressed, identical charges were levelled against the Mormons from various quarters. Inevitably, the time would come when the government would heed such accusations.

The arrival of federal officials in the Great Basin in 1851 gave the Mormons a preview of things to come. To their amazement these officials found an organized government already well established. The celerity with which the Saints had created their territorial government caused the federal officials to suspect that the Mormons considered their presence superfluous. B. D. Harris, Territorial secretary, flatly refused to recognize the Mormon legislature, claiming its election to have been illegal. The

²⁸U.S. Congress, Senate, Territorial Papers, 1789-1873; Utah, December 13, 1849-June 11, 1870; "Petition of Wm. Smith and others, members of the Church of Latter-day Saints, against the admission of the Salt Lake Mormons into the Union as a State."

Mormons ignored Harris' protestations. More trouble arose when Judge Perry Brocchus lectured the Saints on their patriotic duties, and cast some aspersions on the moral virtue of the women in his audience. The Mormons were understandably enraged, and more serious difficulties were avoided only by the rapid departure of the "foreign" officials from the territory. The Mormons, however, had only gained a reprieve, for the "runaway officials" inevitably would call the government's attention to what they considered Mormon obstinacy and disloyalty. Fortunately for the Mormons, Territorial Delegate John M. Bernhisel arrived in Washington before the "runaways" and could thus counteract anti-Mormon propoganda. The Fillmore administration accepted the explanations of the Mormons and sent more amenable representatives. Congress even passed a law under which territorial officials absenting themselves from their post without cause would forfeit their pay. In gratitude, the Saints named their new territorial capital Fillmore, in Millard County.²⁹

²⁹Norman F. Furniss, The Mormon Conflict 1850-1859 (New Haven, Conn., 1960), pp. 21-29. This is the most recent and most balanced account of the episode.

Amicable relations between the Mormons and the federal government, however, lasted but for a short time. Rumors of Mormon disloyalty to the Union kept circulating in Washington, and were the more readily believed because polygamy, now openly avowed by the Saints, seemed a singularly un-American social system to Gentiles. When President James Buchanan sent an ill-starred expedition to Utah in 1857, it was as much to suppress polygamy as an alleged Mormon rebellion. As Richard Poll has pointed out, the Democrats were in dire need of stealing some of the thunder from the Republican "twin relics" platform of 1856 to prove to a reform minded North that the Democrats, too, were against at least one relic of barbarism.³⁰

The Utah War, as it turned out, was a rather half-hearted attempt to bring the Mormons to terms. Congressmen might deliver rhetorical cannonades against social and political conditions in Utah, but "votes were cast in terms of national political considerations."³¹ When an

³⁰Poll, "The Mormon Question Enters National Politics, 1850-1856," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXV (1957), 131.

³¹Ibid., p. 119.

anti-polygamy bill passed the House in 1860, a majority of popular sovereignty senators defeated it, fearing that "it may be claimed that we can also render criminal that other twin relic of barbarism--slavery."³² With the outbreak of the Civil War, the Mormon question was temporarily eclipsed by considerations of far greater weight. Abraham Lincoln, when questioned what he planned to do about the Mormons, replied: "I propose to let them alone." He compared the Mormon question to a knotty green hemlock log on a newly cleared frontier farm. The log being too heavy to remove, too knotty to split, and too wet to burn, he thought it best to "plow around it."³³

With the cessation of hostilities, however, a vociferous group of Protestant clergymen--eager to find an object of social reform--decided that it was time to root out the evil of polygamy.³⁴ Adding what the Mormons believed was

³²U.S., Congressional Globe, 34th Cong., 1st Sess., 1860, p. 2114.

³³Quoted in Orson F. Whitney, History of Utah (Salt Lake City, 1893), II, 24-25.

³⁴According to Anson Phelps Stokes, the anti-polygamy crusade was part of a larger Protestant reform movement. See Church and State in the United States (New York, 1950), II, 267.

insult to injury, the Gentile ministers considered Mormons not only religious but, almost worse, political heretics. The Protestant missions were thus established also to "Americanize" the Mormons.³⁵ In this quest the ministers were aided by the majority of Gentile inhabitants of Utah territory who felt that Mormonism endangered their political rights. These Gentiles, then, were primarily interested in undermining the centralized control exerted by the political Kingdom of God. Frederick T. Dubois, a prominent leader of the anti-Mormon crusade, outlined some of the important political considerations behind the anti-polygamy forces:

Those of us who understood the situation were not nearly so much opposed to polygamy as we were to the political domination of the Church. We realized, however, that we could not make those who did not come actually in contact with it, understand what this political domination meant. We made use of polygamy in consequence as our great weapon of offense and to gain recruits to our standard. There was a universal detestation of polygamy, and inasmuch as the Mormons openly defended it we

³⁵T. Edgar Lyon, "Evangelical Protestant Missionary Activities in Mormon Dominated Areas: 1865-1900" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1962), p. 5.

were given a very effective weapon with which to attack.³⁶

Consequently, a veritable flood of printer's ink inundated the presses and carried a wave of anti-Mormon sentiment across the country. An examination of this literature reveals that those who saw the political Kingdom of God as Mormonism's greatest threat to American liberties could raise their voices in as shrill a tone as those who considered polygamy to be the foulest blot to stain the honor of American womanhood. J. H. Beadle, author of the notorious Life in Utah, insisted that it was "the union of Church and State, or rather, the absolute subservience of the State to the Church, the latter merely using the outside organization to carry into effect decrees already concluded in secret council, that makes Mormonism our enemy."³⁷ The following excerpt from one of the numerous anti-Mormon pamphlets of this period

³⁶Autobiography of Frederick T. Dubois, MS in Idaho Historical Society, p. 29, in Grenville H. Gibbs, "Mormonism in Idaho Politics, 1880-1890," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXI (1953), 291.

³⁷J. H. Beadle, Life in Utah (Philadelphia, 1870), pp. 400-401.

further illustrates this position:

Had Deseret been admitted as a state of the Union, the States would be [sic] confronted not only by polygamy, a foul blot upon civilization, but by a state dominated by an autocratic hierarchy, whose cardinal principle it is that the so-called "Kingdom of God on Earth," i.e. the Mormon Church-State is the only legitimate government on earth, and that all other states and nations must eventually acknowledge its sway. The expurgation of this incubus upon the nation would undoubtedly have involved a civil war.³⁸

Another pamphlet, aptly titled The Mormon Conspiracy to Establish an Independent Empire to be called the Kingdom of God on Earth; . . . assessed the role of polygamy in the fight against the Kingdom of God as follows:

Congress after Congress has been importuned by the saints for the privilege of coming in to the Union, but the request has been denied each time, wholly on account of the polygamous practices of Utah's people, which they could not give up. How strange it is, that a matter of comparatively small consequence to the nation as polygamy is, should have served as the sole means of many years to hold in check this diabolical conspiracy for the founding of a theocratic empire in the very heart of the greatest and freest Republic the world has ever known.³⁹

Historians have been aware for some time that the popular

³⁸ Joseph Nisano, Jr., The Mormon Usurpation (Huntington, N.Y., 1899), pp. 6-7.

³⁹ (Salt Lake City, n.d.), pp. 15-16.

belief according to which polygamy was the primary reason for the persecutions of the Mormons after the Civil War is incorrect, and that polygamy was largely a convenient excuse to strike at the political influence of the Mormon hierarchy.⁴⁰ Mormon historians, however, while acknowledging the fact that the Gentiles were attempting to eradicate the temporal Mormon Kingdom of God have tended to minimize Mormon efforts to build a political kingdom, thus dismissing Gentile accusations as lacking substance. In view of the idea of the political Kingdom of God and the activities of the Council of Fifty, this interpretation can no longer be supported. However much the Gentiles exaggerated and distorted Mormon aims to establish a political kingdom of God the charges are not without a basis in fact. Although this revision provides more understandable motives for Gentile actions against the Mormons, it does not exonerate the anti-Mormons from unjustly persecuting the Saints. Mormon values, in certain respects, differed

⁴⁰Cannon, "The Mormon Issue in Congress, 1872-1892," p. 162; Robert J. Dwyer, The Gentile Comes to Utah (Washington, 1941); Stewart L. Crow, "A Study of the Utah Commission, 1882-96" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1954), p. 247; Poll, "The Mormon Question Enters National Politics," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXV (1957), 119.

significantly from those of American society at large; but this difference was no license for intolerance.

Although it is difficult to document the precise role the Council of Fifty played in this conflict it stands to reason that it assumed major responsibilities in a struggle involving its very existence. This conjecture is supported by some important circumstantial evidence. When the Gentiles, in 1870, threatened the political hegemony of the Kingdom of God by forming the Liberal Party, the Mormons reacted by organizing the People's Party, which acted as the political arm of the Kingdom of God until 1892. It should not surprise, therefore, that the chairman of the central committee of the People's Party, John Sharp, was a member of the Council of Fifty. The major political prize was the Congressional seat in Washington. The People's Party never failed in electing its candidate as delegate to Congress. William H. Hooper, who served the Mormons in Washington until 1872 belonged to the Council of Fifty. So did George Q. Cannon, who replaced Hooper and served until 1892, when he lost his seat under the Edmunds Act. This act not only outlawed polygamy, but denied all those convicted of "unlawful cohabitation" the

right to vote or to hold office. Cannon went to the penitentiary as a polygamist.⁴¹

By ousting Cannon, the Gentiles believed they had won a major victory. Their triumph, however, was short lived, for the People's Party returned another candidate, John T. Caine, to Washington. In view of the circumstances it is highly probable that Caine, too, was a member of the Council of Fifty although the fact cannot be documented. By curtailing the political activities of Cannon, the Gentiles, nevertheless, had struck at the seat of power. After the death of Brigham Young in 1877 Cannon had more influence in the Church than any other man. The non-Mormons, recognizing this fact, had dubbed him the "premier of the

⁴¹Cannon, "The Mormon Issue in Congress, 1872-1882," and Grow, "A Study of the Utah Commission, 1862-1896," are the only significant specialized studies of the political conflicts of this period. Neither, however, take into consideration the activities of the Council of Fifty. A notable exception is James R. Clark, "Church and State Relationships in Education in Utah" (unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Utah State University, 1958) who ascribes a major role to the Council of Fifty in the conflict as it affected education. The best general account of the conflict is in Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, pp. 353-412.

Mormon state" or the "Mormon Richelieu."⁴² It is highly significant, for instance, that until the reorganization of the Council of Fifty in April, 1880, it was George Q. Cannon who kept the records of the Council in his possession in Washington, and not John Taylor, President of the Quorum of the Twelve and subsequent President of the Church.

The reorganization of the Council of Fifty in 1880 suggests that it may have been dormant for a period, possibly since the death of Brigham Young. On March 3, 1880, L. John Nuttall, secretary to the Quorum of the Twelve, wrote the following letter to George Q. Cannon in Washington, D. C.:

Dear Brother: At the last meeting of the Council of the Apostles, the propriety of calling together the Council of Fifty was considered. On enquiry as to the whereabouts of the records and names of the members it was understood that you have the custody thereof upon which I was directed to write to you for such information as will put the Council in possession of said records, preparatory to calling the members together. Please answer at your earliest convenience.⁴³

⁴²Cannon, "The Mormon Issue in Congress, 1872-1882," pp. 4-5.

⁴³L. John Nuttall, Letterpress Book, 1879-1881 (Brigham Young University Library), p. 168.

On March 20, 1880, Nuttall acknowledged the receipt of the records: "Dear Brother: Yours enclosing the key of small box came safely to hand; we have also obtained the box and records in good shape."⁴⁴ On Monday, March 29, Nuttall recorded in his diary that he "went this morning with Elder Franklin D. Richards at his office and examined the records of the council of 50 or Kingdom of God and made out lists of members now living."⁴⁵

The reorganization of the Council took place immediately following the General Conference of the Church in April. On Saturday, April 10, the Council of Fifty convened at 10 a.m. in the Council House, and at 2 p.m. at the City Hall. According to the minutes of these meetings, "some of the first members spoke upon the objectives of the Council etc. and repeated many things that had been said by the Prophets. Elders Taylor, Rich, Woodruff, E. Snow, B. F. Johnson, E. Hunter and Joseph Young."⁴⁶ On April 21, the

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 178.

⁴⁵L. John Nuttall, Diaries (typed copy of original, Brigham Young University Library), March 29, 1880.

⁴⁶Minutes of the Council of Fifty, April 10, 1880.

Council again convened at the City Hall. At this meeting, Feramorz Little, Mayor of Salt Lake City, was "admitted as a member."⁴⁷ The records of the Council indicate that thirty-eight old members were on the lists when the re-organization occurred. During April, fourteen new members were initiated. These fourteen initiates, with few exceptions, were ecclesiastical, political, and economic leaders of the territory. Two of them were to be ordained apostles in October, 1880.⁴⁸

The reasons for the re-gathering of the Council, and the matters discussed at its meetings, are conjectural. The records are silent on these points. Several circumstances surrounding the reorganization, however, should be noted. In 1880, the Church was half a century old. In commemoration of its founding in 1830, the Quorum of the Twelve proclaimed a jubilee year. That same year, in October, saw the reorganization of the First Presidency

⁴⁷ Ibid., April 21, 1880.

⁴⁸ Francis M. Lyman and Moses Thatcher. The other new members were Angus M. Cannon, William W. Cluff, William Jennings, Feramorz Little, L. John Nuttall, William B. Preston, Franklin S. Richards, William R. Smith, Silas G. Smith, John Henry Smith, William W. Whittaker, and Junius F. Wells.

under the leadership of John Taylor. The new president was the exponent of a very conservative and fundamentalist viewpoint in the Church. The Council of Fifty, organized by Joseph Smith himself through revelation, apparently could not simply be pushed aside.

Such considerations, however, most likely were of secondary significance, for the reorganization both of the Council of Fifty and of the First Presidency occurred at a very crucial period in Mormon history. It was in 1890 that the Liberal Party made a special drive to challenge Cannon's seat in Congress. It was in 1890, also, that President Rutherford B. Hayes contemplated a change in policy towards the Mormons. On January 13, Hayes recorded in his diary that he had decided to destroy the temporal power of the Mormon Church: "Laws must be enacted which will take from the Mormon Church its temporal power. Mormonism as a sectarian idea is nothing, but as a system of government it is our duty to deal with it as an enemy of our institutions, and its supporters and leaders as criminals."⁴⁹ In a message to Congress in December, 1890,

⁴⁹Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes, ed. Charles Williams (Columbus, Ohio, 1924), III, 583-84.

Hayes requested the creation of a federal commission to control political affairs in Utah.⁵⁰ These circumstances lend credence to the assumption that the Council of Fifty directed the defense of the Kingdom against the anti-Mormon onslaught. A somewhat cryptic letter, written by L. John Nuttall in 1881 to Bishop William B. Johnson of Kanab of southern Utah, seems to indicate that at its October meetings in 1880, the Council of Fifty may have decided either to expand its organization or else to create subsidiaries reminiscent of the School of the Prophets to meet with the new emergency:

In regard to the admission of more members to the C_____ I do not think it would be advisable at present. In a short time we may organize another, then changes and other admissions may be made. What instructions you may have to impart to those two brethren named, can be done in the usual manner.-- Do not forget to uphold the authorities of the Church and Bro. Cannon at Washington--I am not surprised at the condition of the Canaan Herd, and look for their dissolution.⁵¹

This time, however, the Council of Fifty was unequal to its task. Under the watchful eye of the Utah Commission,

⁵⁰Gustave O. Larson, Outline History of Utah and the Mormons (Salt Lake City, 1958), p. 207.

⁵¹Nuttall, Letterpress Book, 1879-1881, p. 356.

the courts zealously prosecuted offenders of the Edmunds Law. The Mormons called it legal persecution, and many, including John Taylor, went into hiding rather than submit to the humiliating circumstances under which these trials were conducted. The Edmunds-Tucker Law of 1857 further increased the pressures on the Mormons. Under its provisions, witnesses were compelled to testify, including wives against their husbands; voting, holding office, and serving on juries was possible only to those pledging obedience to the anti-polygamy laws under a test oath; church property in excess of \$50,000 was subject to escheat proceedings; the Church itself was disincorporated. Considering even these measures insufficient to crush the political influence of the Mormon hierarchy, the anti-Mormons introduced the Cullick-Struble Bill in Congress in 1889, which threatened complete disfranchisement of all Mormons by providing that belief in the doctrine of polygamy alone was sufficient to bar an individual from the franchise and from holding office. Realizing the futility of further resistance, church leaders finally decided to give in to the demands of the government in order to save the Church from destruction. On September 25, 1890, Church President

Wilford Woodruff issued a statement denying that the Church still solemnized polygamous marriages: "And I now publicly declare that my advice to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land." On October 6, 1890, this so-called Manifesto was unanimously sustained at a general church conference.⁵²

The political Kingdom of God did not survive the Manifesto for very long. Its economic basis, in the words of Leonard Arrington, had been "slain by the dragon of Edmunds-Tucker."⁵³ The People's Party was dissolved in 1893 as part of an alleged deal between church leaders and government officials as one of the conditions of Utah's admission as a state.⁵⁴ The Church, admittedly, gave up its political power reluctantly. From time to time, disgruntled ex-Mormons and Gentiles would revive charges that the Church was attempting to establish a political kingdom of God. But for the most part, these accusations were but

⁵²Doctrine and Covenants, Official Declaration, pp. 256-57.

⁵³Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, p. 379.

⁵⁴R. Davis Bitton, "The B. H. Roberts Case of 1898-1900," Utah Historical Quarterly, XLV (1957), 27-46.

the echoes of a thunder that had already died away. Whether or not they wanted to admit the fact, church leaders realized that a theocratic kingdom of God was too much of an anachronism in the twentieth century.

With the main causes for persecution removed, Mormonism, in the eyes of the world, gradually became acceptable, finally respectable. A new era had dawned. During this second period of Mormon history the Saints looked upon the restoration of the gospel primarily as a preparation for the Kingdom of Heaven. A carefully worked out plan of salvation, as revealed by Joseph Smith, still required many spiritual and temporal duties of the faithful; but dreams of a political kingdom of God had faded away into a dim and almost forgotten past.

CHAPTER VIII

EPILOGUE: THE DECLINE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE INTELLECTUAL TRANSFORMATION OF MORMONISM

Gentile persecution was one of the most important reasons why Mormon church leaders relegated to an undetermined future their attempts to build the temporal Kingdom of God on earth. There were, however, still other factors that contributed to the decline of the Kingdom of God. The Mormon-Gentile conflict of the 1880's had generated the temporary revival of millennial fervor among the Saints, and stimulated the hope that the Church would momentarily be delivered from its enemies. Lorenzo Hatch believed that the Edmunds act was a harbinger of the millennium, and in 1890 many Saints recalled Joseph Smith's prediction of 1835 that fifty-six years should "wind up the scene."¹ John Mills Whitaker recorded in his journal in 1887:

Our only hope lies in the fact that the Lord has promised this as a Choice Land, that

¹Millennial Star, LII (1890), 675.

no King shall rule here, and it has an eternal future and will be the head of the world domination in His own due time, and for this we will pray and wait. For the promise is that it will not be given to another people.²

The optimism of Whitaker's remarks appear to be dampened by a spirit of resignation. As the years wore on without deliverance fatalism among the Saints became more pronounced. At a special priesthood meeting held in Salt Lake City in 1900, Mormon leaders tried their best to counteract this spirit of defeatism. Church President Lorenzo Snow affirmed that "there are many here now under the sound of my voice, probably a majority, who will live to go back to Jackson County and assist in building that temple."³ The site, of course, was to be the original center stake of Zion. This event would herald the immediacy of the parousia. Although Snow's statements "created a profound feeling among all present," it was only too apparent that such enthusiasm was short lived.⁴ In 1903 Benjamin F. Johnson recalled that

²John Mills Whitaker, Journal No. 5 (MS at University of Utah Library), October 16, 1887.

³Ibid., Journal No. 10, November 10, 1900.

⁴Ibid.

"we were over seventy years ago taught by our leaders to believe that the coming of Christ and the millennial reign was much nearer than believe it to be now."⁵ When Johnson, furthermore, felt that he could reveal important secrets of the Council of Fifty to a trusted friend, his action suggested that church leaders themselves no longer hoped for the immediate realization of the political Kingdom of God, an event that definitely had to precede the ushering in of the millennium.⁶ The decline of the idea of the political Kingdom of God was thus an inevitable corrolary of the decline of millennialism.

There were other and more practical reasons why the Council of Fifty ceased to function. The utopian conception of organizing a temporal kingdom that would dominate the world comprised a powerful motivation for a society of farmers and artisans to carve an inland empire out of a hostile environment, and thus provide a physical basis of survival for Mormonism. The positive leadership of the

⁵Johnson to Gibbs, p. 18.

⁶Ibid., passim.

Council may well have been one of the primary reasons why Mormonism, unlike most sects originating early in the nineteenth century, not only survived but continued to thrive. Having successfully accomplished its important mission of establishing a home for the Saints, the Council could no longer employ the utopian vision of a world empire as the justification for the more mundane direction of everyday Mormon endeavors.

In giving up the idea of establishing a political kingdom of God in the near future, Mormon leaders also yielded to pressures from within the Church. The paradoxical nature of the Kingdom--its affiliation with concepts of national manifest destiny and its contrasting insistence on separatist Mormon nationalism--was a phenomenon largely unappreciated by the Saints. Nevertheless, it was patently apparent that the two concepts could not forever exist side-by-side. When, after the Civil War, it became more and more obvious that the chances for a separate Mormon kingdom of God were very remote indeed, a younger generation of Latter-day Saints, recognizing the contradictory nature of the Kingdom, were eager to

identify Mormonism with the mainstream of American life without reservations. Such a desire placed increasing pressure on the Kingdom. The first signs of internal discontent appeared with the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. A number of prominent Mormon businessmen and intellectuals believed that the time had come to end the isolation of the Kingdom. Under the leadership of William Godbe, a prosperous merchant who had been close to Brigham Young, such liberal Mormons as E. L. T. Harrison, Edward W. Tullidge, W. H. Shearman, and Eli B. Kelsey called for cooperation with the Gentiles and for an end to church control over temporal affairs.

Tullidge insisted that the idea of a separatist political kingdom of God was in fact a distortion of what he conceived to be the true meaning and destiny of Mormonism:

The idea never was that this Latter-day Israel was to be as a kingdom within a kingdom. It never was marked down in the divine programme that this Zion of America was in any sense a foreign power (even of divine cast) to be formed within the native galaxy of the American Republic--a "Kingdom of God" whose destiny it was to supersede and

obliterate the present United States.⁷

Rather, Tullidge affirmed, it was the divine mission of Mormonism "to give a more glorious destiny to the American nation itself."⁸ This statement would seem directed against the Gentiles so as to counteract charges that the Saints were intent on establishing an independent kingdom of God. But closer examination reveals that Tullidge was not speaking primarily to the Gentiles but to his fellow Mormons: "When Mormonism is not thus manifested," continued Tullidge, then it is not fulfilling its own distinctive mission and divine calling."⁹ To Tullidge the wish to identify Mormonism with the mainstream of American life had therefore become the father of the thought that the Saints never were fated to establish "a kingdom within a kingdom."

Brigham Young, understandably, could not allow the Godbeite heresy to threaten the Kingdom from within. In an

⁷Edward W. Tullidge, Tullidge's Histories (Salt Lake City, 1889), II, 154.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., p. 155.

investigation before a High Council of the Church, the insurgents were asked if they would acknowledge Brigham Young's right to dictate to them "in all things temporal and spiritual."¹⁰ The followers of Godbe countered with the question of whether or not it was possible for them to honestly differ from the presiding priesthood. "The High Council affirmed that this was contrary to church doctrine," and that they "might as well ask whether [they] could honestly differ from the Almighty."¹¹ Refusing to accept this interpretation, the Godbeites were summarily excommunicated.

It is an ironic commentary on social change that the liberalism of the Godbeites has become the conservatism of twentieth-century Mormonism. This change is vividly illustrated by the testimony of church leaders in hearings before a committee of the United States Senate. In 1903, a powerful group of Senators protested against seating Reed

¹⁰Edward W. Tullidge, "The Godbeite Movement," Tullidge's Quarterly Magazine, I (1880), 32.

¹¹Ibid.

Smoot, Mormon apostle and senator from Utah, on the grounds that the Mormon hierarchy still controlled political affairs in Utah, that separation of church and state were only practiced superficially, and that Smoot was therefore an emissary of the Mormon priesthood as well as a representative of the state.¹² Most of the leading Mormon authorities were subpoenaed to appear before the Senate Committee. Alleged church control of politics, attempts to establish a political kingdom of God, and continued practice of polygamy in defiance of the law were the major charges levelled against the Mormons. Church President Joseph Fielding Smith averred that the Church, and not Smoot, was on trial. These hearings more than anything else forced Mormon leaders to come to a decision on church influence in politics, and on the future of the political Kingdom of God. Smith's testimony would have startled Brigham Young considerably. The son of Hyrum Smith testified that:

¹²U. S., Congress, Senate, Proceedings Before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate in the Matter of the Protests Against the Right Hon. Reed Smoot, a Senator from the State of Utah, to Hold His Seat (4 vols., Washington, 1904-1907).

Our people are given the largest possible latitude for their convictions, and if a man rejects a message that I may give him but is still moral and believes in the main principles of the gospel and desires to continue his membership in the church, he is permitted to remain and he is not unchurched.¹³

This assertion was an affirmation of future policy rather than past practice. The Godbeites had been by no means the only ones excommunicated for refusing to accept the temporal "counsel" of the hierarchy.

The nature of the political Kingdom of God received considerable attention at these Senate hearings. The writings of Orson Pratt on the subject came under particularly close scrutiny. No self-respecting critic of Mormonism could ignore Pratt's famous statement regarding the legitimacy of the Kingdom of God:

The kingdom of God is an order of government established by divine authority. It is the only legal government that can exist in any part of the universe. All other governments are illegal and unauthorized. God, having made all beings and worlds, has the supreme right to govern them by His own laws, and by officers of

¹³ Ibid., I, 97-98.

His own appointment. Any people attempting to govern themselves by laws of their own making, and by officers of their own appointment, are in direct rebellion against the kingdom of God.¹⁴

Perhaps no other statement by a Mormon leader gained as much notoriety in anti-Mormon literature. The task of refuting Pratt before the Committee fell to James E. Talmage, one of the many Mormons of a new generation eager to identify Mormonism with American culture. Talmage drew support from a statement by none other than Brigham Young who had once dismissed Pratt's "vain philosophy" as being "no guide for Latter-day Saints."¹⁵ To Talmage it was irrelevant that Young had levelled the charge in a totally different context, and that the Mormon leader shared Pratt's views regarding the Kingdom of God.¹⁶

¹⁴Orson Pratt, The Kingdom of God, p. 1.

¹⁵Deseret News, August 23, 1865.

¹⁶Letter by Brigham H. Roberts in the James E. Talmage papers, Brigham Young University Archives, n.d. The letter is a request for information that would minimize the temporal and political aspects of the Kingdom of God: "The above references are wanted to aid Brother Talmage in forming testimony to be given before the Senate Investigating Committee." See Spot Proceedings, III, 25-34, for Talmage's testimony.

The social philosophy of Talmage, however, was the only realistic one. The Mormon Church could not publicly reverse its stand on a doctrine as fundamental as that of the political Kingdom of God. In order to save face and to assure its members that church doctrine was not subject to the vicissitudes of social pressures, the hierarchy denied that a political kingdom of God had ever been a fundamental aspect of Mormon aspirations. Church leaders could exercise the separatist tendencies of Mormonism only by insisting that they had never existed. The intellectual transformation of Mormonism could be accomplished only under the pretense that it was not going on. Because Gentile accusations had grossly distorted Mormon aims, church leaders could quite effectively bury the political Kingdom of God through a refutation of these distortions by taking refuge behind semantics and thus not being technically guilty of untruthfulness.

A group of Mormon intellectuals contributed to the Americanization of their religion through their genuine desire to place Mormonism in the mainstream of American thought. Nels L. Nelson, a Professor of English at Brigham Young University, wrote the Scientific Aspects of Mormonism

in 1904 to show how much Joseph Smith had anticipated the thought of Charles Darwin, John Fiske, Thomas Henry Huxley, and Herbert Spencer.¹⁷ Mormonism was in the forefront of those forces that were pushing America ever onward and upward in a cosmic process of scientific and moral evolution. Liberal Mormon historians such as Andrew Love Neff and Leland Creer insisted that the separatist tendencies of Mormonism had existed only as a figment of the imagination of the enemies of the Church. To these historians, the Turner thesis provided a ready-made vehicle for the Americanization of Mormon History. Creer and Neff were among a number of Mormon historians who studied with Herbert Eugene Bolton at the University of California, Neff obtaining his doctorate in 1918, and Creer in 1928. Bolton himself had been strongly influenced by Turner and had passed on his mentor's concepts of geographical determinism to a group of men who would probably have invented a Turner had he not existed, so readily did they apply the frontier hypothesis to Mormon history. To these historians, eager to refute Gentile charges of Mormon

¹⁷ (New York, 1904).

disloyalty to the Union and Brigham Young's political despotism, the Turner thesis was an ideal interpretation of American history.¹⁸ By portraying the Mormons as typical frontiersmen these patriotic revisionists unintentionally provided the historical groundwork for a group of contemporary Mormon writers eager to identify Mormonism as a superpatriotic American religion within the extreme right wing of the American political spectrum.¹⁹ The concept of the political Kingdom of God and the activities of a Council of Fifty are patently incompatible with such attempts to rewrite history.

¹⁸ Creer, Utah and the Nation, and The Founding of an Empire; Neff, "The Mormon Migration to Utah," and, History of Utah, 1847-1869, are in this tradition. Written from this same point of view are Milton R. Hunter, Utah in Her Western Setting (Salt Lake City, 1943) and Levi Edgar Young, The Founding of Utah (New York, 1923). Hunter was another Bolton student.

¹⁹ See for example Ezra Taft Benson, The Red Carpet (Salt Lake City, 1962); Richard Vetterli, Mormonism, Americanism, and Politics (Salt Lake City, 1961).

A visible earthly kingdom of God is one of the chief criteria of a sect.²⁰ The disappearance, therefore, from Mormon thought, of the idea of the political Kingdom of God is a major indication that the transformation of Mormonism from a sect into a church is well underway. The history of Catholicism especially has shown that at a particular period in its development, a church spawns sects of its own that attempt to reform the mother organization, believing it has strayed from the original intentions of the founder. The Fundamentalists are such a Mormon sect. In the periodical Truth, founded in 1935 by Joseph W. Musser, a Mormon Fundamentalist, and published in Salt Lake City, the doctrines of this movement are set forth. The Fundamentalists have achieved considerable notoriety for their insistence on practicing polygamy in defiance of the Manifesto of 1890. In their opinion, Mormonism has given into social and political pressures, placing the laws of man above the laws of God. The fundamental political, social, economic, and spiritual laws

²⁰Ernest Troeltsch, The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches, II, 461-65.

governing man's existence on earth, revealed from heaven, cannot be ignored with impunity. Christ did not usher in the millennium in 1891, as expected, because the Saints had broken these important laws. Polygamy was only one of them. Having given up the idea of the political Kingdom of God, the Saints were also contributing to the political disorder of the world:

This situation can be corrected only when Jesus Christ shall set up his reign under the form of government known as the Kingdom of God, which is destined to subvert all other kingdoms and governments and sweep them from the earth.²¹

Consistent with their point of view, the Fundamentalists revived the Council of Fifty in their own organization. They still look hopefully to the day when its members will rule the Kingdom of God on earth.

The Fundamentalists, primarily because of their insistence on practicing polygamy, have suffered sporadic persecutions, especially from their fellow Mormons who consider

²¹Truth, I (1935), 1.

the movement a threat to the good name of their church. The government of Arizona, however, after a brief attempt to disband a Fundamentalist settlement at Short Creek, has since left them alone. It is after all easy to be tolerant of the inconsequential, of that which man believes to be of no central concern to his existence or survival. It was best, perhaps, that the political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty died in the heat of conflict. They might have met with ridicule and derision, a fate far worse than persecution. In 1960, Bishop Homer A. Tomlinson of the Theocratic Party campaigned for the establishment of a Kingdom of God in the United States, with himself as king and president. Appearing before a cheering crowd of 1,500 Princeton undergraduates, Tomlinson proclaimed that the Kingdom of God was at hand. The students mockingly paraded him around campus on a triumphant tour. His picture appeared on the frontpage of The Daily Princetonian the following day.²² Mormonism was spared such a fate because at the right moment it had responded

²²The Daily Princetonian, December 2, 1960.

to the values of twentieth-century American culture. Without the existence and activities of the Council of Fifty, however, Mormonism might well have failed to enjoy its present stature and prestige within the framework of accepted American religious values and persuasions.

APPENDIX

MEMBERSHIP LISTS OF THE COUNCIL
OF FIFTY, 1844-1880*

*The only complete list of the Council is the one for 1880. All other lists had to be compiled from a variety of sources and are incomplete.

COUNCIL OF FIFTY UNDER JOSEPH SMITH, 1844

Babbitt, Almon
Badlam, Alexander
Bent, Samuel
Bernhisel, John M.
Brown, Uriah
Cahoon, Reynolds
Clayton, William
Coolidge, J. W.
Cutler, Alpheus
Emmett, James
Fielding, Amos
Fullmer, John S.
Haws, Peter
Hollister, D. S.
Hunter, Edward
Hyde, Orson
James, Samuel
Johnson, Benjamin F.
Kimball, Heber C.
Lyman, Amasa
Marks, William
Miller, George
Page, John E.

Parker, John D.
PHELPS, William W.
Pratt, Orson
Pratt, Farley P.
Rich, Charles C.
Richards, Levi
Richards, Willard
Rockwell, O. P.
Smith, George A.
Smith, Hyrum
Smith, John
Smith, Joseph
Smith, William
Snow, Erastus
Spencer, Orson
Taylor, John
Whasson, Lorenzo D.
Whitney, Newel K.
Wight, Lyman
Woodruff, Wilford
Woodworth, Lucien
Young, Brigham
Young, Joseph

Sources: History of the Church, VI, 260-261, 263, 267, 341; Johnson to Gibbs, passim.

COUNCIL OF FIFTY DURING THE EXODUS,
1846-47

Babbitt, Almon	Parker, John D.
*Benson, E. T.	Phelps, William W.
Bent, Samuel	*Pratt, Orson
Bernhisel, John	Pratt, Parley P.
*Bullock, Thomas	Rich, Charles C.
Cahoon, Reynolds	Richards, Levi
*Carrington, Albert	*Richards, Willard
*Clayton, William	*Rockwell, O. E.
Cutler, Alpheus	*Rockwood, Albert P.
Emmett, James	*Roundy, Shadrach
Fullmer, John S.	*Shumway, Charles
Grant, George D.	*Smith, George A.
Grant, Jedediah M.	Smith, John
Haws, Peter	*Snow, Erastus
Hunter, Edward	Spencer, Daniel H.
Hyde, Orson	Spencer, Orson
Johnson, Benjamin F.	Taylor, John
*Kimball, Heber C.	Turley, Theodore
Lee, John D.	Whitney, Newel K.
Lewis, P. B.	*Woodruff, Wilford
*Lyman, Amasa	*Young, Brigham
Miller, George	Young, Joseph
*Pack, John	*Young, Phineas H.

Sources: "Official Records and Diaries of John D. Lee, 1846," pp. 97, 103, 110, 163; Clayton, pp. 202-203.

*Members of first pioneer company to reach the Great Basin, 1847.

COUNCIL OF FIFTY IN COLONIAL UTAH,
1847-49

Babbitt, Almon
Benson, E. T.
Bent, Samuel
Bernhisel, John
Bullock, Thomas
Cahoon, Reynolds
Carrington, Albert
Clayton, William
Eldredge, Horace
Fielding, John
Fullmer, John S.
Grant, George D.
Grant, Jedediah M.
Haws, Peter
Heywood, Joseph L.
Hunter, Edward
Hyde, Orson
Johnson, Benjamin F.
Kimball, Heber C.
Lee, John D.
Lott, Cornelius P.
Lyman, Amasa
Morley, Isaac
Pack, John
Parker, John D.

Phelps, William W.
Pratt, Orson
Pratt, Parley P.
Rich, Charles C.
Richards, Franklin D.
Richards, Levi
Richards, Willard
Rockwell, O. P.
Rockwood, Albert P.
Reundy, Shadrach
Shumway, Charles
Smith, George A.
Smith, John
Snow, Erastus
Snow, Lorenzo
Snow, Willard
Spencer, Daniel H.
Spencer, Orson
Taylor, John
Wells, Daniel H.
Whitney, Newel K.
Woodruff, Wilford
Young, Brigham
Young, John W.
Young, Joseph

Sources: Lee, Mormon Chronicle, I, 80-100.

COUNCIL OF FIFTY, 1880

Bernhisel, John M.	Rich, Charles C.
Bullock, Thomas	Rich, Joseph C.
Burton, R. T.	Richards, Franklin D.
Carrington, Albert	*Richards, Franklin S.
*Cannon, Angus M.	Richards, H. J.
Cannon, George Q.	Sharp, John
Clinton, John	Shunway, Charles
*Cluff, W. W.	Smith, Elias
Eldredge, Horace	*Smith, John Henry
Fullmer, John S.	Smith, Joseph F.
Heywood, Joseph L.	*Smith, Silas S.
Hooper, William H.	*Smith, William R.
Hunter, Edward	Smoot, Abraham O.
*Jennings, William	Snow, Erastus
Johnson, Benjamin F.	Snow, Lorenzo
Kimball, Charles S.	Stout, Hosea
Kimball, David P.	Taylor, George J.
Kimball, H. P.	Taylor, John
*Little, Feramorz	Taylor, William W.
*Lyman, Francis M.	*Thatcher, Moses
*Nuttall, L. John	Wells, Daniel H.
Pack, John	*Wells, Junis F.
Parker, John D.	Woodruff, Wilford
Pratt, Orson	Young, Brigham, Jr.
Pratt, Parley P., Jr.	Young, John W.
Preston, William B.	Young, Joseph

Sources: Minutes of the Council of Fifty, 1880.

*New Members.

MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF FIFTY,
1844-1880

Babbitt, Almon
Badlam, Alexander
Benson, Ezra Taft
Bent, Samuel
Bernhisel, John M.
Brown, Uriah
Bullock, Thomas
Burton, Robert T.
Cahoon, Reynolds
Cannon, Angus M.
Cannon, George Q.
Carrington, Albert
Clayton, William
Clinton, Jeter
Cluff, W. W.
Coolidge, Joseph W.
Cutler, Alpheus
Eldredge, Horace
Emmett, James
Fielding, Amos
Fielding, John
Fullmer, John S.
Grant, George D.
Grant, Jedediah M.
Haws, Peter
Heywood, Joseph L.
Hollister, D. S.
Hooper, William H.
Hunter, Edward
Hunter, Edward, Jr.
Hyde, Orson
James, Samuel
Jennings, William
Johnson, Benjamin F.

Kimball, Charles S.
Kimball, David P.
Kimball, Heber C.
Kimball, H. P.
Lee, John D.
Lewis, P. B.
Little, Feramorz
Lott, Cornelius P.
Lyman, Amasa
Lyman, Francis M.
Marks, William
Miller, George
Morley, Isaac
Nuttall, L. John
Pack, John
Page, John E.
Parker, John D.
Phelps, William W.
Pratt, Orson
Pratt, Parley P.
Pratt, Parley P., Jr.
Preston, William B.
Rich, Charles C.
Rich, Joseph C.
Richards, Franklin D.
Richards, Franklin S.
Richards, H. J.
Richards, Levi
Richards, Willard
Rockwell, Orin Porter
Rockwood, Albert P.
Roundy, Shadrach
Sharp, John
Shumway, Charles

Smith, Elias
Smith, George A.
Smith, Hyrum
Smith, Joseph
Smith, Joseph F.
Smith, John
Smith, John Henry
Smith, Silas, S.
Smith, William
Smith, William R.
Smoot, Abraham O.
Snow, Erastus
Snow, Lorenzo
Snow, Willard
Spencer, Daniel H.
Spencer, Orson
Stout, Hosea

Taylor, George J.
Taylor, John
Taylor, William W.
Thatcher, Moses
Turley, Theodore
Wells, Daniel Hamner
Wells, Junius F.
Whasson, Lorenzo D.
Whitney, Newel K.
Wight, Lyman
Woodruff, Wilford
Woodworth, Lucien
Young, Brigham
Young, Brigham Jr.
Young, John W.
Young, Joseph
Young, Phineas H.

ESSAY ON SOURCES

ESSAY ON SOURCES

A comprehensive bibliography of the primary and secondary sources relating to the Council of Fifty and the political Kingdom of God would require too much space for inclusion here. This essay will be limited to a description and evaluation of the major source materials used in this study, with emphasis on published and unpublished primary sources, and certain secondary works directly related to the Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty. All significant sources, both primary and secondary, have been cited in the footnotes, with the full title given at the time of initial citation.

Manuscripts

The most important collection of Mormon materials is located at the Church Historian's Office of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City. Unfortunately, research in that institution is severely restricted to Mormons and non-Mormons alike. Because of the confidential nature of the Council of Fifty the custodians

of the church records are particularly restrictive to anyone investigating that topic. For that reason the "Manuscript History of Brigham Young," which is one of the best sources on Mormon history from 1844 to 1877 was not available for research. The same is true of the Diaries of George Q. Cannon, which are of particular importance because Cannon was one of the most influential members of the Council of Fifty. Only one scholar, Mark W. Cannon, was recently allowed a glimpse into the Cannon diaries under stringent supervision. The Journal History of the Church, a gigantic scrapbook of about 750 volumes containing excerpts from diaries, journals, letters, and newspapers, forms a day-by-day account from the founding of the Church in 1830 to the present. This history is available for research and was of some use in the present study. A useful condensation was published by Andrew Jenson, Church Chronology (2d ed.; Salt Lake City, 1914).

Whether or not the Church Historian's Office holds official records pertaining to the Council of Fifty cannot be determined at the present time. The fact that the Council kept records of its proceedings has been substantiated from various sources in this study. The Council had

an official clerk and historian. Although John D. Lee indicated that records were at times burned, it seems unlikely that this was a common procedure. Moreover, the possibility that such records were lost or destroyed by accident seems only a remote possibility in view of the deserved reputation which stamps the Mormons as most meticulous and conscientious keepers and preservers of records. As late as 1880, such records were in the hands of church officials. I am grateful that I received permission to look at a manuscript written in pencil, which purports to be a copy of minutes of meetings held by the Council of Fifty in Salt Lake City in 1880. Permission to copy this manuscript, however, was not granted. The provenance of this document cannot be determined. There is, however, at Brigham Young University, a typewritten manuscript of minutes of the Council of Fifty which contains information identical to the one in the Church Historian's Office. The nature of these documents might cast some doubt on their authenticity. The correctness of the information contained therein, however, is corroborated from numerous unimpeachable sources, such as Clayton, pp. 40, 202; Lee, A Mormon Chronicle, I, 80, 98; History of the Church, VI, 260-67.

Fortunately, important manuscripts located in various other libraries give significant information both on the Council of Fifty and the Kingdom of God. Some of the most useful were a letter from Orson Hyde to John E. Page, May 6, 1844, in the Mormon Papers, Woodward folder, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library; the revelations on the Council of Fifty contained in a lengthy letter of Benjamin F. Johnson to George S. Gibbs written between April and October, 1803, typed copy of original at Brigham Young University Library; Diaries and Official Records of John D. Lee, typed copy of original at Brigham Young University; Amasa Lyman, Journal, typed copy of original at Brigham Young University Library; "Minutes of the Provo School of the Prophets," microfilm of original at Brigham Young University Library; L. John Nuttall, Diaries, 1876-1889, typed copy of original at Brigham Young University Library; L. John Nuttall, Letterpress Book, 1879-1881, original at Brigham Young University Library; "Records of the Bishops' Meetings, Provo, 1869-1875," microfilm, Brigham Young University. Of the hundreds of diaries kept by faithful Mormons, the extensive one kept by Hosea Stout is one of the most intimate and valuable.

As a close associate of leading Mormons and a member of the Council of Fifty from 1867 on, Stout preserved many important activities of the Council of Fifty in his record. The originals, located at the Utah State Historical Society, are currently being edited for publication by Juanita Brooks. The Journals of John Mills Whitaker, though giving no direct information on the Council of Fifty, provide an intimate record of the operation of the Kingdom of God in the post Civil War period; originals are located at the University of Utah Library. Crucial to an understanding of Brigham Young's attitude towards the United States and plans for the Kingdom of God are fifty-six letters, signed by Brigham Young and addressed to Council of Fifty member and Congressional Delegate William H. Hooper, 1859-1866, in the Brigham Young Papers, William Robertson Coe Collection of Western Americana, Yale University, available on microfilm at the University of Utah Library. Of considerable importance is the John Zahnd MS in the Manuscript Division of the New York Public Library, containing a rare reference to Joseph Smith's kingship. Important material pertaining to the intellectual transformation of

Mormonism is contained in the papers of George H. Brimhall, Benjamin Cluff, and James E. Talmage at the Brigham Young University Archives. Also valuable, though not giving direct information on the Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty were: "The Life Story of Mosiah Lyman Hancock," typed copy of original, Brigham Young University Library; Lorenzo H. Hatch, Journal, typed copy of original, Brigham Young University Library; Charles Walker, Diary, typed copy of original, Brigham Young University Library.

Public Documents

Among numerous government documents relating to the Mormons, the following were of special significance for this study: U.S., Congress, Senate, Testimony in trial of Joseph Smith, Jr., for High Treason, 26th Cong., 2d Sess., 1841, Senate Doc. 189, which is an account of the trial of Smith and his associates before Judge Austin A. King in Missouri in 1838; U.S. Congress, Senate, Territorial Papers, 1789-1873; Utah, December 13, 1849-June 11, 1870, "Petition of Wm. Smith and others, members of the Church of Latter-day Saints, against the

admission of the Salt Lake Mormons into the Union as a State;" U.S. Congress, Senate, Proceedings before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate in the Matter of the Protests against the Right Hon. Reed Smoot, a Senator from the State of Utah, to Hold His Seat (4 vols.; Washington, 1904-1907); Utah, "Journals of the Legislative Council and House of Representatives, 1851-1894" (microfilmed by Library of Congress).

Mormon Scriptures

These are fundamental to an understanding of the idea of the political Kingdom of God. Mormons accept the King James version as the most authoritative translation of the Bible. The Book of Mormon was first published in 1830, at Palmyra, New York. The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was first published in 1833 at Zion, Jackson County Missouri, under the title, Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ; several enlarged editions, adding further revelations of Joseph Smith, were subsequently issued. In its present form, it has been

published by the Church in Salt Lake City since 1921.

The Pearl of Great Price, "a selection from the Revelations, Translations, and Narrations of Joseph Smith," has been published in its present form by the Church in Salt Lake City since 1921.

Published Diaries, Journals, Letters, and Memoirs, and Source Collections

The most important published collection of Mormon sources is Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts (6 vols.; 2d ed., Salt Lake City, 1950), compiled under Smith's supervision in his lifetime; this is supplemented by a seventh volume, covering the period of Smith's death until the exodus, taken from the Manuscript History of Brigham Young and other documents (Salt Lake City, 1956).

William Clayton, William Clayton's Journal. A Daily Record of the Original Company of "Mormon" Pioneers from Nauvoo, Illinois to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake (Salt Lake City, 1921), contains extremely valuable information on the Council of Fifty by a man who served as its secretary. Benjamin F. Johnson, My Life's Review (Independence, Mo., 1947), is an autobiography by an

original member of the Council. John D. Lee was one of the most prolific diarists among the Mormons. His diaries constitute perhaps the most important single source on the Council of Fifty and the Kingdom of God. The most important of his published diaries is A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee, 1849-1876, ed. Robert Glass Cleland and Juanita Brooks (2 vols.; San Marino, Cal., 1955); also significant are Journals of John D. Lee, 1846-47 and 1859, ed. Charles Kelly (Salt Lake City, 1938); "Journal of the Iron County Mission John D. Lee, Clerk," ed. Gustive O. Larson, Utah Historical Quarterly, XX (1952), 109-134, 253-282, 353-383. Less reliable, because written in the bitterness against church leaders for having made him the scapegoat in the Mountain Meadows massacre, is his Mormonism Unveiled (St. Louis, Mo., 1877). Extremely valuable on the Nauvoo period of the Council of Fifty are the letters of George Miller, written from Saint James on Beaver Island in Lake Michigan while Miller was a member of James Strang's Kingdom of God. These were published in George Miller, Correspondence of Bishop George Miller with the Northern Islander (Saint James, Michigan, 1855); "De Tai Palo Tai

Astilla," ed. H. W. Mills, Annual Publications of the Historical Society of Southern California (1917); an identical version of these letters can be found in 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, n.d.). Parley P. Pratt, The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt (New York, 1847), is by an original member of the Council of Fifty.

Magazines, Newspapers, and Serial Publications

Important Mormon newspapers in Nauvoo were the Nauvoo Neighbor, 1843-45, and the Times and Seasons, 1839-46. The Deseret News, published in Salt Lake City as a weekly since 1850 and as a daily since 1867 is the official organ of the Latter-day Saints' Church. The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star, which began publication at Liverpool in 1840, became the major church organ in the British Mission, containing many articles and editorials on the Kingdom of God. The Journal of Discourses, ed. George D. Watt et al. (26 vols.;

Liverpool, 1854-1886) is an indispensable source for the study of the thought of Mormon leaders, containing many sermons on the Kingdom of God and numerous veiled allusions to the Council of Fifty. Of some value is The Contributor (Salt Lake City), published monthly from 1879 to 1896. Of great importance is the Fundamentalist publication Truth (Salt Lake City), published since 1935. It contains many allusions and direct references to the Council of Fifty and the Kingdom of God. Significant for an understanding of the intellectual transformation of Mormonism are The Utah Magazine (3 vols.; Salt Lake City, 1868-1869), and Tullidge's Quarterly Magazine (Salt Lake City, 1880-1885); the leading Gentile newspaper is the Salt Lake Tribune (Salt Lake City, 1871-), which took a vigorous anti-Mormon stand in the nineteenth century.

Treatises on Mormon Theology

Important aspects of the Kingdom of God are discussed in Charles W. Penrose, Mormon Doctrine (Salt Lake City, 1898); Orson Pratt, The Kingdom of God (Liverpool, 1851); Orson Pratt, Latter-day Kingdom (Liverpool, 1856); Parley

P. Pratt, To Her Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria (Manchester, 1841). The metaphysical implications of the Kingdom of God are discussed in Orson Pratt, Absurdities of Immaterialism (Liverpool, 1849); Orson Pratt, The Great First Cause (Liverpool, 1851); Parley P. Pratt, Key to the Science of Theology (Liverpool, 1855); and John A. Widtsoe, A Rational Theology (Salt Lake City, 1915).

Contemporary Accounts by Non-Mormons
and Anti-Mormon Literature

Most accounts by non-Mormons are strongly biased against the Latter-day Saints and highly unreliable. Some notable exceptions are: Samuel Bowles', Across the Continent . . . (Springfield, Mass., 1865), who observed the Saints as a member of the entourage of Schuyler Colfax and made some penetrating observations about polygamy and the Mormon theocracy; and Sir Richard F. Burton's classic account, The City of the Saints, and Across the Mountains to California (London, 1861), which is to be republished by Alfred Knopf in June, 1963. Thomas Ford, History of Illinois (Chicago, 1854) is primarily an attempt to justify Ford's role in the murder

of Joseph Smith and the expulsion of the Saints from Illinois, but gives important insight into the question of how much Gentiles knew about the Council of Fifty and Kingdom of God. T. B. H. Stenhouse's The Rocky Mountain Saints (New York, 1873), though written in the heat of apostate repudiation, contains valuable information about the Kingdom of God. Howard Stansbury, An Expedition to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake (London, 1852), is a sympathetic view of the Mormon theocracy. The following works, most of which give a highly distorted view of Mormonism and cannot be taken seriously on most counts, are important because they reveal Gentile reaction to the Kingdom of God and the extent to which the anti-Mormons knew about the secrets of the Kingdom. V. H. Beadle, Life in Utah (Philadelphia, 1870) is a vitriolic diatribe; John C. Bennett, The History of the Saints (Boston, 1843) is an expose by a former close associate of Joseph Smith; Frank J. Cannon and Harvey J. O'Higgins, Under the Prophet in Utah (Boston, 1911), was written by a son of George O. Cannon who had performed an important role in Utah politics as church supported Senator in Washington, and had become alienated from the hierarchy. In spite of its violent anti-Mormon tone it contains much valuable information on the negotiations between the Mormon Church and Gentiles preceding the Manifesto and statehood. Another

book by the same author, written in collaboration with George L. Knapp, Brigham Young and His Mormon Empire (New York, 1913), is even more biased. John Corrill, A Brief History of the Church of Latter-day Saints (St. Louis, Mo., 1839), written by an apostate, gives Mormon attempts to set up a temporal Kingdom of God as the main reasons for the Missouri persecutions. Benjamin G. Ferris, who wrote Utah and the Mormons: The History, Government, Doctrines, Customs, and prospects of the Latter-day Saints (New York, 1856), served as Territorial Secretary. John W. Hill, Mormonism vs. Americanism (Salt Lake City, 1889), is representative of the numerous tracts charging the Mormons with disloyalty to the United States. John Hyde, Jr., Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs (New York, 1857), is the work of an apostate; M. W. Montgomery, The Mormon Delusion (Minneapolis, 1890), is valuable because it gives a comprehensive view of Gentile arguments against the Kingdom of God.

Studies of the Kingdom of God
and the Council of Fifty

No satisfactory study of the Council of Fifty and the Kingdom of God exists. Hyrum L. Andrus' monograph, Joseph Smith and World Government (Salt Lake City, 1966) makes no attempt to penetrate the paradoxical nature of

the political Kingdom of God; writing as an apologist, the author sees the political Kingdom as an expression of Mormon Americanism. The section on the Council of Fifty in Nauvoo and during the Exodus while factually adequate fails to come to grips with the major conceptual issues involved. Much superior is James R. Clark's discussion of the Council of Fifty in "Church and State Relationships in Education in Utah" (unpublished Ed. D. dissertation, Utah State University, 1958), although the scope of the author's study limited the extent of his investigation into the Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty; an article by the same author, "The Kingdom of God, the Council of Fifty and the State of Deseret," Utah Historical Quarterly, XLVI (1958), 131-148, is a brief though excellent introduction to the subject. As early as 1944, G. Homer Durham proposed that the idea of a political Kingdom of God was of greater significance for Mormon history than had been suspected up to that time. Durham also suggested that a full understanding of this idea required a study of the Council of Fifty. See "A Political Interpretation of Mormon History," The Pacific Historical Review, XII (1944), 136-150.

Biographical Aids and Studies

Frank S. Eashon, Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah (Salt Lake City, 1913) is of limited value; the most helpful source for biographical information on the Council of Fifty was Andrew Jensen, Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia (4 vols.; Salt Lake City, 1901-1936); Warrum Noble, Utah Since Statehood, Historical and Biographical (4 vols.; Chicago, 1919), is a typical "mugbook." Numerous biographies of greatly varying value touch on the lives of almost all important members of the Council of Fifty. The most inclusive biography of Joseph Smith, though somewhat flippant in tone, is Fawn M. Brodie, No Man Knows My History, The Life of Joseph Smith (New York, 1945); John Henry Evans, Joseph Smith, An American Prophet (New York, 1933) is a favorable account by a Mormon. There is no adequate biography of Brigham Young. M. E. Werner, Brigham Young (New York, 1926) is both superficial and biased against his subject; Preston Nibley, Brigham Young: The Man and His Work (Independence, Mo., 1936) is uncritically favorable. A superior biography of a member of the Council of Fifty is Juanita Brooks, John Doyle Lee, Zealot--Pioneer Builder--Scoundrel (Glendale, Calif., 1962).

General Accounts and Monographs

There is no adequate history of Mormonism. William Alexander Linn, The Story of the Mormons (New York, 1902) is now superseded by Ray B. West, Kingdom of the Saints (New York, 1957); though superior to Linn, West's account is undocumented and frequently superficial; Brigham H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (6 vols.; Salt Lake City, 1930), although written from the viewpoint of the apologist, contains a vast amount of valuable information. Thomas O'Dea, The Mormons (Chicago, 1957), is a superior study by a sociologist. Inez Smith Davis, The Story of the Church (4th ed., rev.; Independence, Mo., 1948), defends the position of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints; a more detailed study from the same point of view, valuable because it contains extensive quotations from sources difficult to locate is Joseph Smith and Helen C. Smith, History of the Church of Latter Day Saints, 1836-1844 (2 vols.; Lamoni, Iowa, 1920).

No satisfactory history of Utah exists. Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of Utah, 1540-1886 (San Francisco, 1889), was written under the watchful eyes of Mormon leaders who made certain that Bancroft and his aides did

not penetrate too far beneath the surface of the social and political spectrum of Utah. Nevertheless, it is still indispensable as a reference work; Orson F. Whitney, History of Utah (6 vols.; Salt Lake City, 1902-1904), is still valuable though uncritical; Andrew L. Neff, History of Utah, 1847-1869 (Salt Lake City, 1940), is a storehouse of information though ignoring a strong separatist current in Mormon history; Leland H. Creer, Utah and the Nation (Seattle, Wash., 1929), is quite uncritical and superficial in interpretation; Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom. An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1930 (Cambridge, Mass., 1938) is also by far the best general history of that period.

Nels Anderson, Desert Saints: The Mormon Frontier in Utah (Chicago, 1942), is an important social history of the Mormons to 1900. Some of the most significant monographs on their respective topics are Robert J. Dryer, The Gentile comes to Utah: A Study in Religious and Social Conflict (1862-1890) (Washington, 1941); Norman F. Furniss, The Mormon Conflict 1850-1859 (New Haven, 1960); Gustave O. Larson, Prelude to the Kingdom (Francestown, N.H., 1947); Dale Morgan, "The State of Deseret," Utah Historical Quarterly, VIII (1940). 65-251;

William A. Mulder, Homeward to Zion (Minneapolis, 1957);
 Kimball Young, Isn't One Wife Enough (New York, 1954).

Franklin D. Baines, "Separatism in Utah, 1847-1870,"
Annual Report of the American Historical Association for
 the Year 1917 (Washington, 1920). Is too short for an
 adequate treatment of the subject; some of the most
 imaginative and penetrating interpretations of Mormonism
 are David B. Davis, "The New England Origins of Mormon-
 ism," The New England Quarterly, XLVI (1953), 147-168;
 Peter Meinhold, "Die Anfaenge des Amerikanischen
 Geschichtsbewusstseins," Saeculum, V (1954), 65-86;
 William A. Mulder, "The Mormons in American History,"
Utah Historical Quarterly, XXVII (1959), 59-77.

The following dissertations were particularly
 helpful for this study: James B. Allen, "The Develop-
 ment of County Government in the Territory of Utah,
 1850-1896" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, Brigham Young
 University, 1956); Gaylon L. Caldwell, "Mormon Concep-
 tions of Individual Rights and Political Obligation"
 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University,
 1952); Mark W. Cannon, "The Mormon Issue in Congress,
 1872-1882. Drawing on the Experience of Territorial
 Delegate George Q. Cannon" (unpublished Ph.D. disserta-
 tion, Harvard University, 1961); R. Kent Fielding,

"The Growth of the Mormon Church in Kirtland, Ohio" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1957); Stewart L. Grow, "A Study of the Utah Commission, 1882-96" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1954); Therald H. Jensen, "Mormon Theory of Church and State" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1938); Thomas Edgar Lyon, "Evangelical Protestant Missionary Activities in Mormon Dominated Areas: 1865-1900" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1962); James Keith Melville, "The Political Ideas of Brigham Young" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1936); A. Russell Mortensen, "The Deseret News and Utah, 1850-1867" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1950); Richard D. Poll, "The Mormon Question, 1850-1865, A Study in Politics and Public Opinion" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, 1948); William Preston, Jr., "The Watershed of Mormon History, 1890-1910" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, Columbia University, 1950); Russel B. Swensen, "The influence of the New Testament upon Latter-day Saint Eschatology from 1830-1846" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1931).

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

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Name: Klaus J. Hansen

Birth: November 29, 1931; Kiel, Germany.

Education: Primary and secondary schools in Germany.
B.A., Brigham Young University, 1957; M.A., Brigham
Young University, 1959.

Positions: Graduate Associate, Department of History,
Wayne State University, 1959-1962; Instructor, Depart-
ment of History, Eastern Michigan University, 1963.

Recognitions: Graduate Scholarship, Brigham Young Univer-
sity, 1958-59; Mattie Woodbridge Metcalf Award, Historic
Memorials Society, 1963.

Memberships: American Historical Association; Mississippi
Valley Historical Association.

Publications: "The Political Kingdom of God as a Cause for
Mormon-Gentile Conflict," Brigham Young University
Studies, II (1960), 241-260; "The Making of King Strang:
A Re-examination," Michigan History, 46 (1962), 201-219.
Book reviews in Brigham Young University Studies and
Michigan History.

