

Joseph Smith and the West

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"I did not devise the great scheme of the Lord's opening the way to send this people to these mountains. Joseph Smith contemplated the move for years before it took place, but he could not get here."¹ So spoke Brigham Young of the Prophet Joseph Smith's vision of the West, a vision that occupied the Mormon leader's mind as early as 1830. Before Joseph Smith moved Church headquarters from New York to Ohio, he declared that the Saints would colonize the West as part of the work of building up the New Jerusalem.

The Mormon view of colonizing the West was directly correlated with the effort the Saints made to build their New Jerusalem. While the *Book of Mormon* revealed that the city of Zion was to be established upon the western hemisphere,² the precise location of the New Jerusalem was not immediately made known. In September, 1830, a revelation declared that it would "be on the border by the Lamanites"—the western border of the United States, near Indian Territory.³ That same revelation spoke of certain brethren going on a mission among the Indians, or Lamanites. When this mission—consisting of Oliver Cowdery, Parley P. Pratt, Peter Whitmer, Jr., and Richard Ziba Peterson—started westward from Fayette, New York, the following month, they went to preach the Gospel and to "rear up a pillar as a witness where the temple of God shall be built, in the glorious New Jerusalem."⁴

The Lamanite Mission had more success among certain sympathetic sectarians in Ohio than among the Indians, and several people in the vicinity of Kirtland were converted. Among them was Sidney Rigdon, who, after his conversion,

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¹*Journal of Discourses*, IV, 41. Hereafter abbreviated J. D.

²See III Nephi 21; Ether 13.

³*Doctrine and Covenants* 28:9. Hereafter abbreviated D. & C.

⁴*Journal History*, October, 1830. Hereafter abbreviated J.H. Said the *Painesville Telegraph*, November 16, 1830, "Some persons came along here last week with a Golden Bible. One of them, Cowdery, declared he had seen and conversed with angels. He was bound on a divine mission to regions beyond the Mississippi where he contemplated founding a City of Refuge."

went to see Joseph Smith, in New York. Upon Rigdon's arrival with the details of the conversion that had occurred, the Prophet sent John Whitmer to preside over the new churches in Ohio. In a letter of introduction, Sidney Rigdon also wrote to his fellow converts of the extensive area the Saints would occupy when the New Jerusalem was established; and at the same time, he turned their thoughts toward the West when he said, "The Lord has made known unto us some of the great things which he has laid up for those that love him, among which the fact, a glory of wonders it is, that you are living on the land of promise and that there (at Kirtland) is the place of gathering *and from that place to the Pacific Ocean he has given it to us and our children.*"⁵

The *Painesville Telegraph*, Painesville, Ohio, January 18, 1831, gave an early commentary on the Prophet's vision of the West, as it reported John Whitmer's arrival in that area, stating, "The more important part of the mission was to inform the brethren that the boundaries of the promised land, or the New Jerusalem, had just been made known to Smith from God—the township of Kirtland, a few miles west of this is the eastern line *and the Pacific Ocean is the western line*; if the north and south lines have been described, we have not learned them."⁶ A revelation in March, 1831, also expressed Mormonism's westward view when it declared:

Before the great day of the Lord shall come, Jacob [i.e. latter-day Israel, including the Latter-day Saints] shall flourish *in the wilderness* [i.e. in barren places] and the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose. *Zion shall flourish upon the hills and rejoice upon the mountain*, and shall be assembled together unto the place which I have appointed.⁷

In January, 1831, another revelation likewise declared that Zion was to "rejoice upon the hills and flourish";⁸ and yet another stated: "I, the Lord, have made my church in these last days like a judge sitting on a hill, or in a high place, to judge

⁵Daniel P. Kidder, *Mormonism and Mormons*, pp. 77-79. (Italics by the writer.)

⁶Italics by the writer.

⁷D. & C. 49:24-25.

⁸*Ibid.*, 39-13.

the nations."⁹ According to Wilford Woodruff, the Prophet made his own commentary on the eventual colonization of the Rocky Mountain area by the Saints, April 26, 1834, when he declared to a group in Kirtland, Ohio:

I want to say to you before the Lord, that you know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and Kingdom than a babe upon its mother's lap. You don't comprehend it. It is only a little handful of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world. It will fill the Rocky Mountains. There will be tens of thousands of Latter-day Saints who will be gathered in the Rocky Mountains and there they will open the door for the establishing of the Gospel among the Lamanites. . . . This people will go into the Rocky Mountains; they will there build temples to the Most High. They will raise up a posterity there, and the Latter-day Saints who dwell in these mountains will stand in the flesh until the coming of the Son of Man. The Son of Man will come to them while in the Rocky Mountains.¹⁰

The vision of the West continued to fill the mind of the Prophet and his associates. In April, 1836, Erastus Snow was given a blessing "predicting that he should yet be employed in the ministry west of the Rocky Mountains, and should there

⁹*Ibid.*, 64:37 ff. In commenting upon these statements in 1853, Orson Pratt said:

Thus we see that twenty-two years ago, it was foretold in great plainness that Zion should flourish and rejoice upon the hills and mountains: when these prophecies were given, we did not know, for many years, how nor when the Lord intended to fulfill them; but fifteen years after the predictions, the Lord suffered our enemies to rise against us and we were driven by the force of arms from those States, and were obliged to flee to the mountains for refuge; thus, in an unexpected manner, Zion is placed in her appropriate position, and is truly beginning to flourish and rejoice upon the hills and mountains, according to the predictions of Joseph the Prophet, and according to many predictions of the ancient prophets.—*The Seer*, I (January, 1853), 6-7.

Joseph F. Smith also made reference to the same subject and inquired:

Who, let me ask, unless he was inspired of the Lord, speaking by the gift and power of God, at that remote period of the Church's history, when our numbers were few, when we had no influence, name or standing in the world—who, I would ask, under the circumstances in which we were placed when this prediction was made, could have uttered such words unless God inspired him? Zion is, indeed, flourishing on the hills, and is rejoicing on the mountains, and we who compose it are gathering and assembling together unto the place appointed . . . If there were no other prophecy uttered by Joseph Smith, fulfillment of which could be pointed to, this alone would be sufficient to entitle him to the claim of being a true prophet.—J.D., XXV, 97-98,

¹⁰*Conference Report*, April 8, 1898, p. 57.

perform a good work in teaching and leading the Lamanites west of the Rocky Mountains."¹¹ Lorenzo Dow Young also received a blessing that same year under the hands of Hyrum Smith and others, of which he said:

Brother Hyrum Smith led. The Spirit rested mightily upon him and he was full of blessing and prophecy. He said that I should regain my health, live to go with the Saints into the bosom of the Rocky Mountains to build up a place there.¹²

From the time the Saints were driven from Missouri, Joseph Smith began laying plans for a great exodus to the Rocky Mountains. This fact is evident from a statement made by Luman Shurtliff, as he entered the Great Basin in 1851:

We got into the Salt Lake Valley, September 23, 1851, thankful to the God of Heaven that I and my family were in the valley of the Rocky Mountains—here where the Prophet Joseph Smith had said thirteen years before [in 1838] that the Saints would go if the government did not put a stop to the mobbing and the persecuting of them.¹³

In a public meeting, April 26, 1846, as the exodus got underway, Orson Pratt referred to the Prophet's early plans to organize a pioneer company to explore the West and find a location for the Saints:

. . . it is eight years today since we all came out of Missouri. *Before that time Joseph the Prophet had this move in contemplation* and always said that we would send a company of young men to explore the country and return before the families can go over the mountains; and it is decidedly my mind to do so.¹⁴

In a very real way the pioneer company that spearheaded the exodus, in 1847, had its origin in the inspiration given to Joseph Smith several years before. Lyman Wight corroborated Pratt's testimony, in a letter to Wilford Woodruff, stating that "such a mission was even talked of while in [Liberty] Jail."¹⁵

¹¹"Autobiography of Erastus Snow," dictated to his son, Franklin R. Snow. Quoted in Joseph William Olsen, "Biography of Erastus Snow," unpublished master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1935, p. 19.

¹²James Amasa Little, "Biography of Lorenzo Dow Young," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, XIV (1946), 46.

¹³"Biographical Sketch of the Life of Luman Andros Shurtliff, 1807-1864," under date. Taken from his personal journal, a copy of which is on file in the Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

¹⁴"Diary of John D. Lee, 1844, 1846, 1850-1851," under the above date. Typewritten copy in Brigham Young University Library. (Italics by the writer.)

¹⁵Letter written by Lyman Wight to Wilford Woodruff, dated August 24,

From the evidence at hand it is apparent that Joseph Smith and others were aware that their stay at Nauvoo, Illinois, would be brief. As Heber C. Kimball and others were crossing the Mississippi River to Nauvoo, in 1839, Kimball looked upon the site of the new city and said, "It is a very pretty place, but not a long abiding place for the Saints."¹⁶ In October, 1840, Wilford Woodruff reflected upon the situation of the Saints, while in England, and reported, "My mind was troubled, for the Spirit manifested unto me much discomfort and persecution among the Saints throughout Europe and America, and that many will fall away; also that the powers that be in America will rise up against the Church and it will be driven."¹⁷ During that same year the Prophet's father, Patriarch Joseph Smith, Sr., informed the family of William Huntington, Sr., that the Saints would be in Nauvoo but seven years. "The Lord has told Joseph so," he declared; and after the Saints left Nauvoo they would "go into the Rocky Mountains, right into the midst of the Lamanites."¹⁸

The attitude of the Saints at this time was expressed very well by Wilford Woodruff when he wrote in his *Journal*, "Notwithstanding the Saints are driven from city to city and from place to place, they are determined to build a city wherever their lot is cast, showing themselves to be industrious and insistent in maintaining the Kingdom of God."¹⁹ The following day he reported meeting many old friends from Missouri, and of them said: "They generally felt well and were not discouraged, but felt to trust in God. The Saints felt determined to build up a city wherever they went."²⁰ Oliver B. Huntington registered similar sentiments when he reported:

Joseph finally led us to Nauvoo.

Well, and how can we build a Zion here? This is not Missouri.

1857, at Mountain Valley, Texas. Letter on file in Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah. Wight was with Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail.

¹⁶Helen Mar Whitney, *Woman's Exponent*, Salt Lake City, IX (July 1, 1880), 18.

¹⁷Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff*, (Salt Lake City, 1909), p. 153.

¹⁸"Diary of Oliver B. Huntington, 1847-1900," Typewritten copy in Brigham Young University Library, Part II, 210; *Young Woman's Journal*, II, 314-315.

¹⁹J. H., May 18, 1839.

²⁰*Ibid.*, May 19, 1839.

Under Joseph's all-inspiring wonder we quickly resolved that "We would stay here as long as Joseph wants us to—he knows what is best," so we then set to with all our mights to do just what the Prophet Joseph directed and in a few months there was quite a town built up out of as near nothing as God ever made anything.²¹

It was out of this background that Joseph Smith gave utterance to his most detailed prophecy on the exodus west. Under date of August 6, 1842, he reported in his *Journal* that he had crossed the Mississippi to Montrose, Iowa, with others, to witness the installation of certain officers of the Rising Sun Lodge, of the Masonic Order. Said he:

While the Deputy Grand-Master was engaged in giving the requisite instructions to the Master-Elect, I had a conversation with a number of brethren in the shade of the building on the subject of our persecutions in Missouri and the constant annoyance which has followed us since we were driven from that state. I prophesied that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains, many would apostatize, others would be put to death by our persecutors or lose their lives in consequence of exposure or disease, and some of you will live to go and assist in making settlements, and build cities, and see the Saints become a mighty people, in the midst of the Rocky Mountains.²²

Anson Call was present and added further details pertaining to this prophecy in the following statement:

I had before seen him in a vision and now saw while he was talking his countenance change to white; not the deadly white of a bloodless face, but a living brilliant white. He seemed absorbed in gazing at something at a great distance, and said: "I am gazing upon the valleys of those mountains." This was followed by a vivid description of the scenery of these mountains, as I have since become acquainted with it. Pointing to Shadrach Roundy and others, he said: "There are

²¹*Young Woman's Journal*. II, 314-315. Brigham Young expressed a common attitude among the saints when he said:

If I knew that I was going to burn all my buildings next season, it would not hinder me for one hour from making improvements. The more I do, the more I shall be prepared to do. And I am determined to prepare to lay up the walls of Zion and to learn all I can, so that, if I should happen to be one of the men to engage in that work, I shall know how to commence and dictate the foundation of the walls of Zion and those of the Temple.—L.D., V, 170.

²²*History of the Church*, V, 85-86.

some men here who shall do a great work in that land." Pointing to me, he said: "There is Anson, he shall go and shall assist in building up cities from one end of the country to the other, and you (rather extending the idea to all those he had spoken of) shall perform as great a work as has been done by man, so that the nations of the earth shall be astonished, and many of them will be gathered in that land and assist in building cities and temples, and Israel shall be made to rejoice."

It is impossible to represent in words this scene which is still vivid in my mind of the grandeur of Joseph's appearance, his beautiful descriptions of this land and his wonderful prophetic utterances as they emanated from that glorious inspiration that overshadowed him. There was a force and power in his exclamations of which the following is but a faint echo: "Oh the beauty of those snow-capped mountains! The cool refreshing streams that are running down through those mountain gorges!" Then, gazing in another direction, as if there was a change in locality: "Oh the scenes that this people will pass through! The dead that will lay between here and there!" Then, turning in another direction as if the scene had again changed; "Oh the apostasy that will take place before my brethren reach that land!" "But," he continued, "the priesthood shall prevail over all its enemies, triumph over the devil and be established upon the earth never more to be thrown down!" He then charged us with great force and power, to be faithful in those things that had been and should be committed to our charge, with the promise of all the blessings that the priesthood could bestow. "Remember these things and treasure them up. Amen."²³

In the closing months of his life, Joseph Smith spent "many hours" conversing about the West. Said he: "If I were only in the Rocky Mountains with a hundred faithful men, I would then be happy, and ask no odds of mobocrats."²⁴ In a letter to Brigham Young, April 8, 1845, Governor Thomas Ford reported having had a conversation with the Prophet on the subject. Said Ford, "I was informed by General Joseph Smith, last summer, that he contemplated a removal west; and from what I learned from him and others at the time, I think if he had lived, he would have begun to move in the matter before this time."²⁵

²³Edward W. Tullidge, *History of Northern Utah and Southern Idaho: Biographical Supplement*, pp. 271-272.

²⁴J. D., XI, 16.

²⁵J. H., under date.

During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the great arid regions of the West were but little understood by men east of the Mississippi. In referring to this vast region, they usually spoke in generalities. Information on specific areas was not readily available, so that the Great Salt Lake Basin might be referred to as part of Upper California or as part of the Oregon Territory. According to Joseph Smith, the Saints were to build up cities "from one end of the country to the other."²⁶ But he did not say immediately where their headquarters would be located. This point was not made clear until he and his associates had studied the problem for some time and had considered various alternatives.

An anti-Mormon convention of rabid and radical elements, held at Carthage, Illinois, February 17, 1844, stimulated the Prophet to set the machinery in operation for actually planning and carrying out the exodus. Three days later he "instructed the Twelve Apostles to send out a delegation and investigate the locations of California and Oregon, and hunt out a good location, where we can remove to after the temple is completed."²⁷ The following day the matter was again discussed;²⁸ and of a meeting held February 23rd, the Prophet wrote:

Met with the Twelve in the assembly room concerning the Oregon and California Exploring Exploration; Hyrum and Sidney present. I told them I wanted an exploration of all that mountain country. Perhaps it would be best to go directly to Sante Fe.²⁹

The expedition was to consist of twenty-five humble and prayerful men who could "raise \$500, a good horse and mule, a double-barrel gun, one-barrel rifle, and another smooth bore, a saddle and bridle, a pair of revolving pistols, bowie-knife, and a good sabre."³⁰ So certain was the Prophet that the Saints

²⁶Tullidge, *op. cit.*

²⁷*History of the Church*, VI, 222.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 223. Under date of February 21, 1844, Wilford Woodruff wrote:

I met with the Quorum of the Twelve at Joseph's store, and according to Joseph's counsel a company was selected to go on an exploring expedition to California, and to select a place for the building of a city. Jonathan Dunham, Daniel Fullmer, Phineas Young, Samuel W. Richards and several others were named for the expedition—Cowley, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 224.

³⁰*Ibid.*

would be in the West in a short time that he "prophesied that within five years" the Saints would be out of the power of their enemies, "whether they were apostates or of the world."³¹

For a time Joseph Smith was persuaded to look toward Texas for a possible location for at least some of the Saints. As a newly founded republic, Texas was anxious to have strong groups of colonists settle the vast uninhabited regions over which she claimed jurisdiction, including the territory between the Nueces and the Rio Grande Rivers. Meanwhile, a group the Prophet had sent to Wisconsin territory to get out lumber for the Temple and the Nauvoo House wrote, proposing that upon completion of their task they remove to "the table-lands of Texas." There they would establish "a place of gathering for all the South and maintain a missionary terminal whence the Gospel might be spread throughout Texas, Brazil, the West Indies, and adjacent areas."³²

When George Miller arrived in Nauvoo with the suggestion from the men in the "Pineries," Joseph Smith commented, "I perceive that the Spirit of God is in the pineries as well as here, and we will call together some of our wise men, and proceed to set up the Kingdom of God by organizing some of its officers."³³

The organization the Prophet then formulated, March 11, 1844, he referred to as a *Special Council*,³⁴ and later as the *General Council*.³⁵ Because of the number who initially held membership therein, it was also known as the Council of Fifty. The General Council was essentially a political body, purporting to be the nucleus council of the municipal department of the Kingdom of God. Its immediate responsibilities included the task of planning for and carrying out the exodus of the Saints, and of establishing them in the West under a government subject to the United States Constitution. In his *Journal*, Brigham Young explained:

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 225.

³²*Ibid.*, pp. 256-258.

³³George Miller, Sr., and George Miller, Jr., A Mormon Bishop and His Son, *Fragments of a Diary kept by George Miller, Sr., Bishop in the Mormon Church, and some records of incidents in the life of the G. Miller, Jr., Hunter and Pathfinder*, ed. H. M. Mills (London, England, nd.), p. 48.

³⁴See *History of the Church*, VI, 260-61, 263, 264.

³⁵See *ibid.*, pp. 274, 343, 356, etc.

Joseph commenced the organization of a Council for the purpose of taking into consideration the necessary steps to obtain redress for the wrongs which had been inflicted upon us by our persecutors, and also 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 laws, subject to the Constitution.

The Council was composed of about fifty members, several of whom were not members of the Church.

We prepared several memorials to Congress for redress of grievances, and used every available means to inform ourselves of the unoccupied territory open to settlers.

We held a number of sessions, and investigated the principles upon which our national government is founded; and the true foundation and principles of all governments.

Joseph Smith was appointed chairman, William Clayton, clerk, and Willard Richards, historian of the Council.³⁶

The desire expressed by the brethren in Wisconsin apparently was not inconsistent with the Prophet's view of colonizing the West at that time, as he immediately commenced negotiations with Texas for an extensive strip of land between the Nueces and the Rio Grande Rivers. And under date of May 3, 1844, Brigham Young and Willard Richards wrote from Nauvoo to Reuben Hedlock, in England, stating, "If any of the brethren wish to go to Texas, we have no particular objection. You may send a hundred thousand there if you can."³⁷

Negotiations with Texas were exploratory. It was first proposed that a stake of Zion be established there, but evidently there was also some talk of moving the Church to that area.³⁸ However, such proposals did not prevent the Prophet from considering other alternatives. At the time negotiations with Texas were going on, he memorialized the Federal Government of the United States for authority to raise a police force

³⁶"History of Brigham Young," *Millennial Star*, XXVI, 328-329. For evidence that the General Council and The Council of Fifty were the same body, see Willard Richard's *Journal*, March 22, 25, 1845; April 15, 22, 29, 1845, etc., and compare with meeting dates of the General Council, as reported in the *History of the Church*. Original *Journal* of Willard Richards is on file in the Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 345.

³⁸For further information on this subject, see Hyrum L. Andrus, *Joseph Smith and World Government* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1958), Chapter II.

of 100,000 men to establish the jurisdiction of the United States throughout the West and to give protection and order to the work of colonization.³⁹ Here was an intelligent proposal of great magnitude. Had it been adopted, the lawlessness of the early West could largely have been minimized; and the Saints would immediately have ceased considering settling in the area of Texas.

Meanwhile, the Prophet sent representatives to Washington, D.C., to study the westward move from that point of vantage and to work in behalf of the Saints. Heber C. Kimball wrote to his wife, June 12, 1844, that he and Lyman Wight had presented a petition requesting the Federal Government "to give us some land somewhere in the world, either in Texas, Arizona, or Iowa."⁴⁰

Orson Pratt, Orson Hyde, and John E. Page were also in the nation's capital in the spring of 1844. About the middle of May, 1844, the Prophet received two letters from Hyde. In one he reported an interview with Senator Stephen A. Douglas and said, "He is ripe for Oregon and the California." Hyde also quoted the Little Giant as declaring that "he would resign his seat in Congress if he could command the force that Mr. Smith could, and would be on the march to the country in a month."⁴¹ In the second letter Hyde wrote:

Most of the settlers in Oregon and Texas are our old enemies, the mobocrats of Missouri. If, however, the settlement of Oregon or Texas be determined upon, the sooner the move is made the better, and I would not advise any delay for the action of government for there is such a jealousy of our rising power already, that government will do nothing to favor us. . . .

Your superior wisdom must determine whether to go to Oregon, to Texas, or to remain within these United States.⁴²

A few days later Hyde again wrote, discussing in some detail the proposed removal to Texas, and cautioned against it.⁴³

³⁹*History of the Church*, VI, 274, 275-277, 281-282, 369.

⁴⁰Whitney, *op. cit.*, XI (January 1, 1883), 114. The issue of redress for the loss of lands purchased from the federal government in Missouri was involved in this petition, which explains their request for land.

⁴¹*History of the Church*, VI, 373-374. Douglas also supplied Hyde with a copy of John C. Fremont's map of Oregon, with his report of the West. *Ibid.* p. 375.

⁴²J. H., April 25, 1844.

⁴³See J. H., April 30, 1844.

Whether this letter was a determining factor in the Prophet's decision to abandon the Texas proposal is not clear, but the fact remains that after the middle of May until the time of his martyrdom, June 27, 1844, nothing further was said on the matter.⁴⁴ Instead, existing evidence indicates conclusively that he settled upon the Great Salt Lake Basin as the future headquarters of the Saints. Brigham Young later explained, "When the pioneers left the confines of civilization, we were not seeking a country on the Pacific, neither a country to the north or south; we were seeking a country which had been pointed out by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the midst of the Rocky Mountains, in the interior of the great North American continent."⁴⁵

With such clarity was the westward move of the Saints to the Rocky Mountains set forth by Joseph Smith that he pointed out in detail the course of their future travels. "One of the pioneers, George H. Goddard, . . . left on record the statement that he was present in the Masonic Hall in Nauvoo when Joseph Smith mapped out on the floor with a piece of chalk the Great Basin of western America, indicating the course they would follow across the continent."⁴⁶ Hopkins C. Pendar also reported that "Joseph Smith just before he was killed, made a sketch of the future home of the Saints in the Rocky Mountains and their route or road to that country as he had seen [it] in vision; a map or drawing of it." Levi W. Hancock either made this map as Joseph Smith pointed out the way or drew a copy of one made by the Prophet, from which other copies were made. Brigham Young kept one copy, and "one was carried by the Mormon Battalion by which they knew where to find the Church, or, Salt Lake Valley."⁴⁷ Mosiah Hancock, son of

⁴⁴Had the Saints gone to Texas, to the area proposed, they would undoubtedly have formed their own political government, separate from the republic of Texas or the government of Mexico; territorial status under the United States in that area would also have been virtually impossible under existing circumstances. Knowing this, the Prophet and his associates voted, May 6, 1844, to send Almon W. Babbitt to France. Undoubtedly, his mission was to feel out the French government to determine the course it would follow toward such a new government. But Babbitt never left Nauvoo. The indication is that shortly after his appointment the whole idea was abandoned. See Andrus, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

⁴⁵J. D., XVI, 207.

⁴⁶E. Cecil McGavin, *Nauvoo the Beautiful* (Salt Lake City, 1946), p. 127.

⁴⁷"Diary of Oliver B. Huntington," II, 425

Levi, threw further light on this matter when he reported a visit by Joseph Smith to his father's home, immediately before his departure for Carthage:

... the Prophet came to our home and stopped in our carpenter shop and stood by the turning lathe. I went and got my map for him. "Now," said he, "I will show you the travels of this people." He then showed our travels thru Iowa, and said, "Here you will make a place for the winter; and here you will travel west until you come to the valley of the Great Salt Lake! You will build cities to the North and to the South, and to the East and to the West; and you will become a great and wealthy people in that land."⁴⁸

In light of these reports, the testimony of William Henry Kimball, son of Heber C. Kimball, is significant. Kimball wrote that he was present in the home of Stephen Winchester, in Nauvoo, with twenty-five others, when Joseph Smith spoke of his coming martyrdom; and "then and there he mapped [out] the life and acts of Brigham Young until [his] death." Said Kimball, "I can assure you it never failed in one instance; I have witnessed the fulfillment of all of the prophecy to a letter and act."⁴⁹

The westward move predominated in the Prophet's thinking during the closing days of his life. To the Nauvoo Legion he said, June 22, 1844, "Your mission will be to the nations of the earth. You will gather many people into the fastness of the Rocky Mountains."⁵⁰ That evening as he and Hyrum considered the growing possibility that they would be martyred if they fell into the hands of their enemies, Joseph's countenance brightened and he exclaimed:

⁴⁸"The Life Story of Mosiah Lyman Hancock," typewritten copy in Brigham Young University Library, pp. 27-29.

⁴⁹Letter of William Henry Kimball to Emmeline B. Wells, written at Coalville City, Summit County, Utah, January 20, 1907. Original on file in Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah. The writer has corrected certain errors in spelling and punctuation.

⁵⁰The writer has located two independent sources that give almost verbatim accounts of this address. Samuel Holister Rogers, who was present, gave one report. See "Journal of Samuel Holister Rogers," typewritten copy, Brigham Young University Library, pp. 198-201. William Pace, who was present as a lad in his early teens, also reported the address and then adds, "I am indebted to Alfred Bell of Lehi, Utah, for the above . . . taken on the spot by him, and supposed to be very correct." See "Diary of William Byran Pace and Biography of his father James Pace," typewritten copy, Brigham Young University Library, pp. 3-6. Wandle Mace also gave a partial report of this address in which the above quoted portion is found. See "Journal of Wandle Mace, 1809, 1890," typewritten

The way is open. It is clear to my mind what to do. All they want is Hyrum and myself; then tell everyone to go about their business, and not to collect in groups, but to scatter about. . . . We will cross the river tonight, and go away to the West.⁵¹

The *History of the Church* makes this further report: "About 9 p.m. Hyrum came out of the Mansion and gave his hand to Reynolds Cahoon, at the same time saying, 'A company of men are seeking to kill brother Joseph, and the Lord has warned him to flee to the Rocky Mountains to save his life.' "⁵² After the Prophet and others had crossed the river, Orrin P. Rockwell was sent back to Nauvoo to obtain horses for the journey, with instructions to be "ready to start for the *Great Basin in the Rocky Mountains.*"⁵³ But when certain brethren accused the Prophet of cowardice for leaving the Saints, he returned to Nauvoo. Before giving himself up, he assembled the Legion and instructed and cautioned them again:

I will therefore say to you Saints and Elders of Israel, be not troubled nor give yourselves uneasiness so as to make rash moves by which you may be cut short in preaching the gospel to this generation, for you will be called upon to go forth and call upon . . . free men . . . to gather themselves in the strongholds of the Rocky Mountains.⁵⁴

With the vision of the westward move of the Saints in his mind, Joseph Smith went to Carthage, to a martyr's death. And as the pioneer company arrived in the Great Basin three years later, to fulfill that vision, Brigham Young explained, "We have come here according to the direction and counsel of Brother Joseph, before his death."⁵⁵

After the death of Joseph Smith, the General Council, under the leadership of Brigham Young, continued to make plans for the exodus. Several entries in Brigham Young's *Journal* in-

copy, Brigham Young University Library, p. 131. The *Journal History* for this date merely reports, "Legion met as usual; and after receiving instructions, were dismissed until 6 p.m., when they met again."

⁵¹*History of the Church*, VI, 545-546.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 547.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 548. (Italics by the writer.)

⁵⁴"Journal of Samuel Holister Rogers," *op. cit.*, and "Diary of William Byran Pace," *op. cit.* The writer's comment on the Prophet's previous address to the Legion is also applicable here. The *History of the Church* reports that the Prophet spoke to the Legion on this date, but does not report his comments. See *History of the Church*, VI, 557.

⁵⁵J. H., July 28, 1847.

dicate the nature and extent of the Council's activities at that time. On March 18, 1845, Brigham Young met with that body all day;⁵⁶ and again on the 22nd.⁵⁷ In the latter meeting, "the subject of the western mission was considered and occupied the most of the day."⁵⁸ Several other meetings were also held that spring.⁵⁹

On September 9, 1845, the General Council "Resolved that a company of 1500 men be selected to go to Great Salt Lake Valley and that a committee of five be appointed to gather information relative to emigration, and report the same to the council."⁶⁰ Here is further evidence that before the Saints left Nauvoo they knew where they were to settle in the West. And here they sought again to send out a pioneer body that could prepare the way for the Saints to follow, as outlined by Joseph Smith several years before.

In preparing for the exodus, the General Council selected twenty-five men as Captains of Hundreds, "whose business it was severally to select one hundred families and see that they were prepared for a journey across the Rocky Mountains." The Captains of Hundreds then selected their own Captains of Fifties, Captains of Tens, Clerks, etc.⁶¹ As the exodus commenced, this initial organization was revised, first, at Sugar Creek, about seven miles west of Nauvoo; second, at Richardson's Point, some fifty-five miles from Nauvoo; and, then, at the Chariton River.⁶²

"As a legislature of the people," Benjamin F. Johnson noted that the General Council directed "all general movements relating to our exodus as a people from Nauvoo."⁶³ Because the Council functioned in the exodus as a political organ among

⁵⁶*History of the Church*, VII, 387.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 387-388.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, In his *Journal*, under date, Willard Richards specifically reports this meeting as being held by the Council of Fifty.

⁵⁹In his *Journal*, Willard Richards reports meetings of the Council of Fifty on the following dates: March 25, April 15, April 22, April 29, May 6, and May 10, 1845.

⁶⁰*History of the Church*, VII, 439. See also pp. 454-455.

⁶¹J. H., March 27, 1846.

⁶²See John D. Lee, "Diaries and Official Records of John D. Lee, 1844-1846, 1850-1851, 1861-1878." Unpublished diaries, minutes, etc., kept by Lee (not complete), Brigham Young University Library, under February 17, 1846, March 9, 1846; J. H., March 27, 1848.

⁶³Benjamin F. Johnson, "An Interesting Letter," unpublished letter from

the Saints, Ezra T. Benson, a prominent member therein, looked upon the Saints as they moved west as "a distinct nation."⁶⁴ It was this body that determined the route the Saints were to travel, and cared for the needs of the people as they traveled, as the minutes of a meeting held by the Council, February 22, 1846, illustrate:

In the forenoon, Chas. C. Rich, who had the day previous been appointed to look after the grains and provider, reported . . . to the council. . . .

Second, the subject of policy and economy was up before the council and decided that the camp should be called together and they be instructed to stop using such articles as will be most suitable to take on the road. . . .

Third, J. D. Lee, by request of Willard Richards, presented a bill of tin brought into the camp by Wm. F. Cahoon (before the council), amounting to \$53 and some cents, which he proposed to sell by wholesale at a discount of 15 per cent. . . .

Fourth, the council [decided] that all reports of corn, grain, provisions, wagons, teams, etc., be handed to J. D. Lee.⁶⁵

Several members of the General Council were assigned to key positions in the various companies. But while this arrangement gave central direction to the exodus, it made it difficult at times for all members of the council to get together. At times, then, only those readily available would meet. The minutes of such meetings very often specify those of the Quorum of the Twelve and others of the General Council who were present, as in the meeting of April 2, 1846:

At 11 a.m. a convention of the council met some 200 yards south of the encampment. Pres[ent] of the Twelve: B. Young, H. C. Kimball, O. Pratt, P. P. Pratt, G. A. Smith. Father John Smith, Bishop [George] Miller, A. P. Rockwood, Shadrach Roundy, B. F. Johnson [and] J. D. Lee [were also present] of the council of the YTFIF [i.e. Fifty], Capt. Stuart, Winter, Benson and others. Several letters were laid before the council and one letter was answered to Elder O. Hyde. . . . Council also decided that the camp roll on 5 miles this evening.⁶⁶

Johnson to George S. Gibbs, April to July, 1903, Brigham Young University Library, pp. 9, 23. Johnson was a member of the Council.

⁶⁴*Journals of John D. Lee*, ed. Charles Kelley (Salt Lake City, 1938), p. 25.

⁶⁵"*Diary of John D. Lee, 1844, 1846, 1850-1851*," February 22, 1846.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, under date. See also the meetings held April 18 and May 20, 1846.

At a meeting of the Council, May 20, 1846, another effort was made to send a pioneer company ahead; but again circumstances prevented. The following month the Federal Government called upon the Saints for 500 men to fight in the war with Mexico. The General Council made the decision to recruit the Mormon Battalion.⁶⁷

The final arrangements for moving the Saints to the Great Basin were made at Winter Quarters. To this end a series of meetings was held by the General Council, beginning December 25, 1846, and continuing through the 27th. Brigham Young wrote, in a letter to Charles C. Rich, January 4, 1847, that the Council decided to "send on a pioneer company as early as possible with plows, seed, grain, etc." Other companies were to follow.⁶⁸

The departure of the pioneer company for the Great Basin terminated the meetings of the General Council for a time; and as clerk of the Council, William Clayton delivered "the records of the K. of G. [Kingdom of God]" to Brigham Young.⁶⁹ As the pioneer company moved toward its destination, President Young spoke of their ideal of universal peace under the Kingdom of God, the foundations of which they were going west to establish:

I would say to you brethren, and to the Elders of Israel, if you are faithful, you will yet be sent to preach this Gospel to the nations of the earth and to bid all welcome whether they believe the Gospel or not, and this kingdom will reign over many who do not belong to the Church, over thousands who do not believe in the Gospel. Bye and bye every knee shall bow and every tongue confess and acknowledge and reverence and honor the name of God and His priesthood and observe the laws of the kingdom whether they belong to the Church and obey the Gospel or not, and I mean that every man in this company shall do it. That is what the scripture

⁶⁷Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 24; Johnson to Gibbs, pp. 22-23. See also *William Clayton's Journal*, pp. 50-54; J. H., July 13, 1846.

⁶⁸J. H., December 25, 26, 27, 1846; Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.

⁶⁹*William Clayton's Journal*, p. 74. Clayton reported that in the pioneer company there were the following men who were members of the General Council: Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, Orson Pratt, George A. Smith, Wilford Woodruff, Amasa Lyman, Ezra T. Benson, Phineas H. Young, John Pack, Charles Shumway, Shadrach Roundy, Albert P. Rockwood, Erastus Snow, William Clayton, Thomas Bullock, Albert Carrington, and Orrin Porter Rockwell. See *Ibid.*, pp. 202-203.

means by every knee shall bow, etc., and you cannot make anything else of it.⁷⁰

Orson Pratt later referred to the feelings he experienced when the pioneer company arrived in the Great Basin, when he commented, "I felt as though it was the place for which we had so long sought."⁷¹

When the company reached Salt Lake Valley, a High Council was organized to hold jurisdiction in the Valley after Brigham Young and others returned to Winter Quarters. John Smith, Charles C. Rich, and John Young were appointed to preside as the new Stake Presidency. As members of the General Council, John Smith and Charles C. Rich could act in both a civil and an ecclesiastical capacity.⁷² This, however, was but a temporary arrangement, and those who remained in the valley looked forward to the time when the General Council would assume the responsibility of dispensing law and order in the area. In a meeting held October 10, 1847, they discussed the High Council's authority in the light of the greater powers reposed in the General Council:

P. P. Pratt told of the government of the Stake: the Prest., his Counselors and the High Council. Here the High Council has to attend to temporal as well as spiritual matters, for we have no county and state officers, etc. . . . [We] need a law to prevent men from settling in a scattered manner and to prevent cutting green timber; and all such laws will be for the people of this stake for the time being. *No one quorum has power to give eternal laws for this people but a greater council which contains [includes] the Twelve may do this . . . The council above named will regulate this matter as soon as they come up and sit. . . .*

John Taylor stated that P. P. Pratt had told the truth with regard to organization and law, etc., and there were as many as 20 or thereabouts present who knew it . . .⁷³

After Brigham Young and other members of the General Council were permanently settled in the Great Basin, the Council commenced again to direct the civic affairs of the people. On December 9, 1848, they met and discussed the

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 195-196.

⁷¹J. D., XII, 88.

⁷²John Young was made a member of the General Council, January 20, 1849. See J. H., under date.

⁷³Charles C. Rich's *Journal*, under date. Original on file in Church Historian's Office. (Italics by the writer.)

propriety of petitioning the federal government for a territorial government, with officers of their "own nomination." Territorial boundaries were discussed and the name *Deseret* proposed. Brigham Young was nominated governor; Willard Richards, secretary; Heber C. Kimball, chief judge; Newel K. Whitney and Parley P. Pratt, associate judges; and John M. Bernhisel, marshal.⁷⁴ With certain alterations, these proposed officers were later established in office within the provincial State of Deseret. The General Council also organized itself into the provincial legislature of that government about the time the above nominations were made; and, thus, Joseph Smith's plan for establishing the Saints in the Great Basin came to fruition.⁷⁵ Indeed, with reference to the State of Deseret, Brigham Young could say, "Joseph Smith organized this government before, in Nauvoo."⁷⁶

So well did the General Council do its work, during the winter of 1848-49, that when the State of Deseret was officially organized, in July, 1849, there was no immediate business for the new government to consider. The first session of the legislature was primarily concerned with other matters. As for the State's proposed constitution, it was an ideal. John M. Bernhisel wrote to Brigham Young from Washington, October 2, 1850, stating, "The Constitution of Deseret was much admired by statesmen here, not only as being very ably written, but was regarded as the best Constitution of the Country."⁷⁷ There have been few, if any, organs of government that can boast of so orderly and intelligent a beginning. It is a credit to Joseph Smith that the guiding principles he set forth and the organization developed therefrom should result in so orderly a formation of government in the West, and that the end-product should receive such acclaim.

⁷⁴J. H., December 9, 1848; John D. Lee, *A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee, 1848-1876*, ed. Robert Class Cleland and Juanita Brooks (San Marino, California, 1955), I, 80-82.

⁷⁵See Andrus, *op. cit.*, pp. 91 ff.

⁷⁶J. H., January 19, 1863.

⁷⁷Cited in Andrew Love Neff, *History of Utah* (Salt Lake City, 1940), pp. 118-119.