

# “The Kingdom of God and His Laws”

Joseph Smith’s Revelations and  
Teachings on Christ’s Kingdom and  
Church in the Council of Fifty

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During the months before Joseph Smith’s death, he sought to establish God’s kingdom on earth through a new organization that he called the Council of Fifty. This council was tasked with planning and preparing a constitution for this new government, a kingdom that would await the imminent return of Jesus Christ, who would then assume his rightful place at the head of that kingdom.<sup>1</sup> This doctrine of Christ’s imminent return was familiar because of the New Testament’s insistence upon the Lord’s return but also because it was readily available in many of Joseph’s canonized revelations. The closing passage from a late 1830 revelation instructed the Saints to “lift up your hearts and be glad, your redemption draweth nigh. Fear not, little flock, the kingdom is yours until I come. Behold, I come quickly” (Doctrine and Covenants 35:26–27).<sup>2</sup> In these council meetings, held during the last four months before his murder, Joseph delivered powerful teachings about what the government of God’s

kingdom should look like and how members of the Church should practice their religion. During this period, Joseph received his final revelations—revelations that captured the pinnacle of a prophetic career that had shaped thousands of Christian lives amid periods of deep hostility. These revelations and teachings “shed new light on the development of Latter-day Saint beliefs and on the history of Nauvoo and the Church during this critical era” and bring precision to the Saints’ understanding of their role in God’s kingdom. While these revelations were never included in the Doctrine and Covenants, they nevertheless reveal important insights into how Joseph Smith believed Latter-day Saints should live and act as they sought to do their part to prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

For Joseph Smith and for the Council of Fifty, the expansion of the Restoration as a series of principles and practices that were comfortably cast in a religious framework provided the structure upon which the kingdom of God could be established. The incorporation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints into God’s broader designs for the millennial reign challenged the Council to see their relationship to Christ as expansive and dynamic. The Council of Fifty thought in concrete terms about the nature of Christ and his kingdom. As the council grappled with properly devising policy regarding the kingdom of God, its members learned to rely upon their hard-earned insights and collective genius as a medium to better comprehend and act upon prophetic counsel. In the end the council tested the decision-making mechanism as it endeavored to draft a constitution for the kingdom and prepared to live out its plan in the West. The Council of Fifty’s implementation of principles developed and garnered through prophetic instruction demanded that the Saints continue to work both in practical and in theological ways toward the realization of the kingdom of God even after the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

The Council of Fifty produced a wealth of documentation about its deliberations on a variety of political matters as it looked for possible places of refuge from persecution and violence. At the same

time, those debates and revelations were framed within theological and practical discussions about the ways that Nauvoo Saints could participate in the unfolding of the Second Coming of Christ. The anticipated Christ, as described by the members of the Council of Fifty, was characterized by his millennial reign and his full dominion of all the earth. Further, the immediacy of Christ became central to the Council members through their understanding that Joseph Smith was the temporary leader of that kingdom on earth who would usher in Christ's kingship.

## **Practical Context of the Council of Fifty**

By early 1844 Joseph Smith had come to a conclusion that would have long-lasting implications for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its members. He had for years sought every means of political recourse to find someone, anyone, in the national government who would be willing to champion the Latter-day Saint cause. Joseph hoped someone would rebuke the murderous deprivations of Missouri state troops and allied mobocratic forces and help the Saints finally recover lands that had been confiscated from them without remuneration. At the center of his interests and concern was the confiscated temple site of the New Jerusalem, placed by revelation in Jackson County (see Doctrine and Covenants 57). Assaults, thefts, house burnings, and even cold-blooded murders of children went unpunished following the so-called Mormon War in Missouri, and none of the murderers at Hawn's Mill or the violent assailants at De Witt or Far West had even been criminally charged. Between 1838 and 1844 Joseph's appeals for justice included a journey to Washington, D.C., and an interview with President Martin Van Buren, who famously refused to help on political grounds. Joseph desperately tried to get the Saint's story of persecution out to those who he believed could and would aid his community in righting the wrongs against them. In this case, Joseph's agenda was driven by the temporal safety of his people.

The matter of federal or state intervention on behalf of the Latter-day Saints was exacerbated by ongoing debates during the Jacksonian era about whether the government had the authority to intervene in matters of state jurisdiction.<sup>3</sup> The Latter-day Saint petition, as Patrick Mason has asserted, was destined to fail in halls of the federal government and presidency because it “barely registered on the national radar during the Joseph Smith era. Mormonism only became a national concern in the 1850s after the establishment of what outsiders saw as a Mormon theocracy in Utah territory and the Mormon’s 1852 public announcement of plural marriage.”<sup>4</sup> While this conclusion seems clear in hindsight, Joseph and the early Saints seemed to believe that their plight would gain favor if those in Washington could hear it from the Saints themselves.

In 1843, with another presidential election looming, Joseph had written to every rumored candidate of the upcoming 1844 presidential election, asking, “What will be your rule of action relative to us as a people?”<sup>5</sup> One by one, the candidates confirmed in writing what Joseph already knew from experience. With varying levels of pretense and sophistry, each presidential hopeful expressed some level of regret at the treatment of the Latter-day Saints but claimed to have neither the power nor the will to commit to render aid—or the force of law—to the beleaguered and persecuted religionists. Former secretary of war Lewis Cass, for instance, told Joseph that while he personally believed “the Mormonites [should] be treated as all other persons in this country are treated, . . . I do not see what power, the President of the United States can have over the matter, or how he can interfere in it.”<sup>6</sup>

To make matters worse, antagonistic rhetoric in Illinois began to take on an alarming nature as it once had in Missouri, with one local newspaper declaring, “We see no use in attempting to disguise the fact that many in our midst contemplate a total extermination of that people: that the thousands of defenseless women, aged and infirm, who are congregated at Nauvoo, must be driven out, aye, driven, scattered like the leaves before the autumn blast!”<sup>7</sup>

Horrified by the implications of such sentiments and rebuffed by national politicians of both parties, Joseph Smith made the difficult decision for the Latter-day Saints to leave the United States entirely and set up their own kingdom with a just constitution and laws somewhere out in the West. By February 1844 he informed the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of his plans "to send out a delegation & investigate the locations of California and Oregon to find a good location where we can remove after the Temple is completed & build a city in a day and have a government of our own—in a healthy climate."<sup>8</sup> The lack of helpful response from federal and state authorities, reminiscent of the Saints' experiences in Missouri, provided great urgency to the council's efforts to prepare to leave the country.

Plans to leave the United States proceeded more rapidly after March 1844 when Joseph organized the Council of Fifty. This group was tasked with seeking out a place where this new kingdom of God could be built outside the boundaries of the United States. Over the course of the next several months, its members considered multiple locations, including the independent Republic of Texas, Comanche or Cherokee lands, Oregon Territory (which was at the time jointly administered by Great Britain and the United States), and the vast expanses of Northern Mexico (which were essentially bereft of permanent white settlements and over which Mexico exercised no practical control).

## **Praxis and Prophetic Wisdom—Integral Parts of Modern Revelation**

The revelatory nature and theological undergirding of the Council of Fifty gets lost when viewed through the lens of pragmatic immediacy. However, as we demonstrate, the ultimate aim of the council's efforts was to unite the Restoration project of prophetic authority, institutional church, and millennial reign through an aggressive political program. It is easy to focus on the overtly political nature of the Council of Fifty's work as it pushed for new lands and for increased

freedoms, security and protection. Much of the work of the council members focused on practical solutions to real-world problems confronting the Saints in Nauvoo. The story of the Saints' desperate search for a new home outside the bounds of the United States is a historically compelling narrative that is most easily understood politically. But to overlook the deeply religious roots of the move—to locate a space where theocracy and safety coalesced—is to misunderstand the motivation that prompted thousands to move west. As they had previously in Ohio and Missouri, the Saints in 1844 sought to relocate when the political and social circumstances became too hostile. In the process of deliberating on their options, they located the impetus for migration in the revelations and the prophetic counsel provided by Joseph and later by his successor, Brigham Young. In an earlier revelation received during the hardships and disillusionment that followed the revealed location of Zion to be in Jackson County, Missouri, the Saints learned the necessity of physical suffering while awaiting God's promised peace. By revelation, the Lord taught Joseph and the Saints that "after much tribulation come the blessings" and that they "shall be crowned with much glory; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand" (Doctrine and Covenants 58:4). The tangibility of revelation as both expedient and eternal within the Latter-day Saint tradition is manifest in the revelations obtained by Joseph during the Council of Fifty meetings. These two aspects of revelation were not only parallel but also were intricately bound by the physicality of the Christ the Saints hoped would soon return to the world.<sup>9</sup>

The Council believed that the events described in scripture would be realized when their community and the individuals in it attained an acceptable level of holiness. Those aspirations pointed toward yet another phase of the Restoration project—the eventual fulfillment of the promised return of the Savior to reign on the earth. The Saints' efforts were cast within a broader understanding that the work of God, the sonship of Jesus Christ, and the earthly existence of a people seeking to be in direct communion with "the creator of the Universe as their Priest, Lawgiver, King and Sovereign" were theologically

connected.<sup>10</sup> While the Saints awaited Christ’s return, they were to be “anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; for the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:27–28). Revelatory teaching about Christ was often meant to illustrate an eschatological context within which Saints’ immediate actions served as preparatory steps toward God’s direct involvement in the world on their behalf. A revelation from 1833 makes this point clear. In Doctrine and Covenants 93, the most striking christological framing of Jesus Christ available in all of Latter-day Saint writing, Joseph learned, “I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world; and that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one—the Father because he gave me of his fulness, and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:2–4). It is perhaps telling that in the very same christological revelation, the Saints learned that because of their knowledge of Christ and his nature, they were to “hasten to translate my scriptures, and to obtain a knowledge of history and of countries, and of kingdoms, of laws of God and man, and all this for the salvation of Zion” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:53). The practical commands of scripture were both immediate and connected to the broader purposes of God. Likewise, the Saints and the Council of Fifty understood their mission to build up the earthly kingdom of God and saw the detailed steps they took to do so as clear manifestation of their hopeful commitment to await the coming of the Lord that was “nigh at hand” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:4).

### **The Purpose of Counsel in the Council of Fifty**

At one of the earliest council meetings, the select men gathered together and agreed that they should seek out a place to “go and establish a Theocracy either in Texas or Oregon or somewhere in California.”<sup>11</sup> Passion ruled the meeting as the “brethren spoke very

warmly on the subject.”<sup>12</sup> Joseph had encouraged the members of the Council to “speak their minds on this subject and to say what was in their hearts whether good or bad.”<sup>13</sup> A council that simply accepted the first proposal in order to be agreeable defeated the entire purpose of having a council. Joseph pressed that point, telling the men that he “didn’t want to be forever surrounded by a set of dough heads and if they did not rise up and shake themselves and exercise themselves in discussing these important matters he should consider them nothing better than dough heads.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, the purpose of the Council of Fifty was to fully examine opinions, options, and revelations as a means of deciphering the way forward through reason and prophetic instruction; such a process brought heated debate into the room as council members spoke passionately about their views. For Joseph and the Saints, the pattern of the heavenly council contained in Joseph Smith’s translation of the Bible, set out in Moses 4, made clear that good and bad ideas needed to be heard in order to make obvious to the council the proper order and logic of eventual decisions. The fact that God the Father had, according to scripture, provided a platform where diametrically opposed opinions in matters of eternal consequence could be discussed openly may have suggested to Joseph that his council, if predicated upon righteous principles, could do the same. A few weeks later, as he further instructed the men on the necessity of discussion and debate when a difference of opinion arose, Joseph Smith taught that “the reason why men always failed to establish important measures was, because in their organization they never could agree to disagree long enough to select the pure gold from the dross by the process of investigation.”<sup>15</sup>

During the 11 March 1844 council meeting, Joseph Smith “gave much instructions on many subjects and laid down the order of the organization after the pattern of heaven.”<sup>16</sup> If the Saints were going to build the kingdom of God, the Council of Fifty would serve as its model. This council, they believed, operated in accordance with divine order, established long before the Restoration project ever began (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:32). They endorsed the idea



of "forming a constitution which shall be according to the mind of God and erect it between the heavens and the earth where all nations might flow unto it." This new kingdom with its godly constitution would be a "standard to the people and an ensign to the nations."<sup>17</sup> Having determined to abandon the United States because of its flawed government and legal system, the men envisioned a kingdom with laws ordained by God. In essence, the work of the council could, if properly instituted and carried out, actually unite heaven and earth. Joseph and other members of the council hoped for and talked at length about such a kingdom, and while they used the language of hope and futurity, they also expected it to be realized in their council.

The council members sat in a semicircle, ordered from oldest to youngest. They voted audibly in this order, beginning with the eldest on each matter under consideration. Joseph Smith declared it "universally necessary before any resolution could become a law to have the vote of all the members of the council unless some of the members should be absent on business for the council." Thus the large council would have to unanimously agree on a decision or law for the proposed kingdom of God before it could be considered ratified. While the idea of unanimous consent of a political body sounds to the modern observer like a recipe for disaster (since one person could simply hold out against the other forty-nine), the reality was that those dissenting from the majority view had to have good reason for their position. Brigham Young later explained, "In the event of a negative vote being given on any subject, the member voting in the negative is called upon to give his reasons for thus voting. If his reasons are not good and based in righteous principles he will be called upon to suppress and waive them, and thus do away with his opposition. If this were not the case one brother through private pique alone could do manifest wrong and injury to men as good as himself, a principle which this kingdom cannot tolerate. If a member should persist in his opposition after it is proved to him that he is in the wrong, his opposition would sever him from the council."<sup>18</sup> In any case, while multiple

views were expressed as Joseph directed, there is no record of such an obstinate holdout on any of the issues discussed in the council.

It was in one of the initial meetings—designed to organize the council and discuss its objectives—that Joseph received divine direction. As the gathered men began discussing what they should name the council, William Clayton recorded that “the Lord was pleased” to give Joseph Smith a revelation in response: “Verily thus saith the Lord, this is the name by which you shall be called, The Kingdom of God and his Laws, with the keys and power thereof, and judgement in the hands of his servants. Ahman Christ.”<sup>19</sup> A few weeks later Joseph explained to the council the “meaning of the word ‘Ahman’ which signifies the first man or first God, and ‘Ahman Christ’ signifies the first mans son.”<sup>20</sup> The name of the council was generally shortened in usage to simply “the Kingdom of God.” Joseph would cap the size of the council at fifty, hence the more informal, and publicly palatable, designation—Council of Fifty. When Brigham Young took over as chair of the council following Joseph Smith’s murder, he wrote in his journal that he “had a council with the fifty righted up & organized.” When William Clayton created the title page of the minutes of the organization, he wrote, “Record of the Council of Fifty or Kingdom of God.”<sup>21</sup>

This revelation reflected Joseph’s unique and radical theology and Christology, focused on the assertion that God not only had a body but that he was in fact a resurrected man who had progressed to godhood. Several years earlier Joseph had explained to a group of Saints that the Father and the Son “had a tabernacle,” or body, in direct contravention of long-established Christian beliefs that held only Jesus had a resurrected body. In that sermon he explained, “The Great God has a name By wich he will be Called Which is Ahman.”<sup>22</sup> Only a few weeks after receiving this revelation at the council meeting, Joseph greatly expanded upon this understanding of God the Father and Jesus in the address commonly referred to as the King Follett sermon. In Wilford Woodruff’s account of that sermon, he recounted Joseph teaching that “I go back to the beginning to show

what kind of being God, was, I will tell you & hear it O Earth! God who sits in yonder heavens is a man like yourselves[.] That god if you were to see him to day that holds the worlds you would see him like a man in form, like yourselves. . . . I want you to understand God and how he comes to be God. We suppose God was God from Eternity, I will refute that idea . . . It is the first principle to know that we may convers with him and that he once was a man like us, and the Father was once on an earth like us.” Joseph declared not only that God was a man who had progressed to become God but that the righteous likewise would “enjoy the same rise exhaltation & glory untill you arive at the station of a God.”<sup>23</sup>

## **Making Christ’s Promise to Reign a Political Reality**

The name of the council having been thus received by revelation, participants turned their attention to the constitution that would govern the new kingdom wherever they ended up settling. On the second day of council meetings, four prominent members—three of them apostles—were assigned to a committee with the daunting task of drafting a “constitution which should be perfect, and embrace those principles which the constitution of the United States lacked.” John Taylor, Willard Richards, Parley P. Pratt, and W. W. Phelps spent several weeks poring over various founding documents as they felt their inadequacies in drafting such an important document.<sup>24</sup>

By April 4 the committee still had not delivered a draft of the constitution to the entire Council. After the committee described their difficulties, Hyrum Smith suggested that the document should be “as concise as possible to embrace all that was necessary for our guidance.” As debate about the proposed constitution continued, Joseph Smith provided this guideline: “That it was right always to judge in favor of the innocent, and it was wrong always, to judge in favor of the guilty[.] He wanted to see a constitution that would compel a man to

execute justice in favor of the innocent.”<sup>25</sup> The brazenness with which Missouri state officials had disregarded the law and individual rights was no doubt on Joseph’s mind. When this lawlessness was coupled with President Martin Van Buren’s disregard for the Saints’ plight, the move toward a declaration of political sovereignty became necessary. With these new instructions, the council resolved to have the committee present their draft constitution on the following day.

Accordingly, on April 5 John Taylor and Willard Richards tepidly gave their report of a draft constitution. Richards read what the committee had thus far composed and asked for more time to complete the draft. Taylor explained that one of the problems they encountered was the “lack of power and correct principles in the various governments on the earth.” We do not know what was contained in this initial draft, but the records show that Hyrum Smith and Wilford Woodruff expressed their approval of the course taken thus far by the committee. As the discussion continued, Brigham Young expressed his thoughts on creating a constitution for the kingdom of God. Like the intention to create the New Jerusalem as a holy city, he “thought the law would be written in every mans heart, and there would be that perfection in our lives, nothing further would be needed.” While the committee attempted to create a document by examining other forms of government, Young saw all of these governments as imperfect and corrupt. To Young, the Church and the kingdom of God were so distinct from the rest of the world that they could not be compared. Young asserted, “Revelations must govern. The voice of God, shall be the voice of the people. We want to build up the whole church, in all longsuffering.” In the ensuing discussion, Joseph Smith shared another aspect he believed should be included in the new constitution: “We have a right to complain of the government untill they redress our wrongs.”<sup>26</sup>

After another frustrating week with no progress on the draft constitution, committee member W. W. Phelps addressed the council. He recognized the gravity of the assignment given to the committee, citing the document they were creating as probably “the most

important ever undertaken by any committee."<sup>27</sup> While he asked for more time, he also proffered a different solution to their impasse, telling the council "that inasmuch as we have a lawgiver appointed of heaven he was anxious that the committee could have his assistance to prepare the document."<sup>28</sup> Cornelius Lott immediately echoed his endorsement of bringing the Prophet onto the committee to draft the constitution because "no undertaking seems to go right without his assistance; . . . the shortest way is to have the president come to it first as last."<sup>29</sup>

Surprisingly, when W. W. Phelps motioned that the Prophet be added to his committee, it was Joseph who objected. Joseph articulated that it was necessary for the committee to first "bring forth all the intelligence they could, and when their productions were presented to him [then] he could correct the errors and fill the interstices where it was lacking."<sup>30</sup> Perhaps sensing the surprise of the members of the committee, Joseph opined further on what exactly he thought the government of the kingdom of God should look like. He taught that while they were seeking to build a theocracy in their new home, he believed a "theocracy consisted in our exercising all the intelligence of the council, and bringing forth all the light which dwells in the breast of every man, and then let God approve of the document & receiving the sanction of the council it becomes law. Theocracy as he understands it is, for the people to get the voice of God and then acknowledge it, and see it executed."<sup>31</sup> Again, the pattern of council in Moses 4 provided the model. Within Latter-day Saint doctrine, there was a premortal life council during which Lucifer and Jehovah offered opposing plans. God the Father allowed all to hear both sides of the argument and then, as the head of that council, made a decision.

Joseph used the idea of *vox populi vox Dei* to show that the people both work for wisdom on their own but must be willing to draw upon prophetic counsel inasmuch as it clarifies, redirects, or corrects their own judgment. This meant the members of the council were to struggle to figure out the proper course of action themselves and then

seek prophetic guidance when necessary. Joseph encouraged others to work on their own before he interjected opinion and guidance.

But why, given Joseph's prophetic role, would the committee need to present their best attempt at a constitution of the kingdom of God before he would help them? Joseph explained that if he were to simply receive the revelation for the document, council members might criticize the document, thinking to themselves that they could have produced a better product, or perhaps they might assail individual points. "There has always been some man," Joseph cautioned with an air of long and sad experience, "to put himself forward and say I am the great. . . . I want the council to exert all their wisdom in this thing, and when they see that they cannot get a perfect law themselves, and I can, then, they will see from whence wisdom flows. I know I can get the voice of God on the subject."<sup>32</sup> For Joseph, the council generally and the committee specifically needed to make every effort to create a constitution, and only then would they recognize that the best efforts of men's wisdom pale in comparison to the revelations of God.

Indeed, if the council simply relied on Joseph to tell them what to do, they would not increase their own abilities. Such idealization of human effort in connection with the process of revelation was not foreign to the Saints since they understood Joseph's desire to have them learn the pattern of revelation and then be able to apply it in their own lives. He wanted them to gain secular knowledge along with revealed knowledge. He explained, "I want every man to get knowledge, search the laws of nations and get all the information they can; . . . every man ought to study Geography, Governments and languages, so that he may be able to go forth to any nation and before any multitude with eloquence." In response to Joseph's teachings, W. W. Phelps arose and committed to following the Prophet's instruction, agreeing that, "If after all our labors we should not be able to get what we want we will then call upon our head."<sup>33</sup>

A week later Willard Richards, on behalf of the committee, sheepishly presented the more complete but still unfinished constitution, which included some of the direct teachings Joseph Smith had

given in the council as well as the revelation he had received on the name of the council. The draft constitution highlighted key aspects: the supremacy of God the Father; the expansive nature of Christ's role as Savior, Redeemer, and King; the corrupt kingdoms established by human design; the role of the prophet and the fulfillment of prophecy; and the eternity of Christ's eventual reign upon the earth:

We, the people of the Kingdom of God, knowing that all power emanates from God, that the earth is his possession, and he alone has the right to govern the nations and set in order the kingdoms of this world; that he only has a right to institute laws and establish decrees for the government of the human family; that he is our Father in heaven; and we, his legitimate children, inhabiting his footstool, and that no rule, law, government, dominion or power, unless instituted by him, can be productive of the greatest happiness, prosperity, exaltation and glory of his subjects:— And knowing also that none of the nations, kingdoms or governments of the earth do acknowledge the creator of the Universe as their Priest, Lawgiver, King and Sovereign, neither have they sought unto him for laws by which to govern themselves;—And knowing also, that there is not an original kingdom on the earth that holds the rightful authority from the king of Kings and Lord of Lords, to govern his subjects: but that all the nations have obtained their power, rule and authority by usurpation, rebellion, bloodshed, tyranny and fraud:—

And knowing also, that no government, which has thus originated, has the disposition and power to grant that protection to the persons and rights of man, viz. life, liberty, possession of property, and pursuit of happiness, which was designed by their creator to all men; but that the cruelty, oppression, bondage, slavery, rapine, bloodshed, murder, carnage, desolation, and all the evils that blast the peace,

exaltation, and glory of the universe, exist in consequence of unrighteous rule, and unlawful dominion, by which the pure, the patriotic, the noble, the virtuous, the philanthropic, . . . the righteous and wise servants of God have been persecuted, hunted, whipped, scourged, exiled, massacred, sawn asunder, crucified and slain in all ages of the world, under all earthly authorities, and by every form of government, from the days of murderous Cain, to the days of the exterminating [Lilburn W.] Boggs of Missouri; And that all the pride, corruption, impurity, intrigue, spiritual wickedness in high places, party spirit, faction, perplexity and distress of nations, are the natural results of these illegitimate governments:— And knowing that God hath created all men free and equal:— And having sought in vain among all the nations of the earth, to find a government instituted by heaven; an assylum for the opprest; a protector of the innocent, and a shield for the defenceless:— an impenetrable Aegis for the honorable of all nations; uncorrupted by the usurpations of designing men, the contaminating influence of the love of Gold, and the lawless intrigues of aspiring demagogues:— unfettered by unrighteous legislation, and untrammelled by the mandates of an unjust judiciary; not degraded by a superstitious or religious influence: A Realm where liberty spreads undivided and operates unspent; and where truth and virtue are the centre and circumference of the nation; are as enduring as the hills of eternity, and as omnipotent as the voice of Jehovah:— To hasten the accomplishment of his purposes: To fulfil the predictions of the prophets to establish a pure government; to lift up an ensign to the nations, and establish a standard for all people, that the strength, and the power, and the glory, and the exaltation, and the kingdom, and the dominion under the whole heavens, may become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ, as has been predicted by all the holy prophets since the world began, to be brought to pass on



the earth in the last days; where peace, union, harmony, fellowship, philanthropy, benevolence, virtue, and brotherly love shall reign triumphantly together in the bosom of every subject and where the elements, the light, the air, the water and the land shall be as free as the gift of their creator; where we can rest under the shadow of his wing, and where the supreme law of the land shall be the word of Jehovah:—

We have supplicated the great I am, that he would make known his will unto his servants, concerning this, his last kingdom, and the law, by which his people shall be governed: And the voice of the Lord unto us was,— Verily thus saith the Lord, this is the name by which you shall be called, the kingdom of God and his Laws, with the keys and power thereof, and Judgement in the hands of his servants, Ahman Christ,

Art. 1st. I Am, the Lord thy God, ruleing the armies of heaven above, and among the nations of the earth beneath; I have created all men of one blood; I set up one, and I put down another, and to me alone belongs the right, the power, the majesty, the glory, and the dominion; I alone am King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; I alone am the rightful lawgiver to man; I alone have a right to judge the inhabitants of the earth, which is my footstool; and I will acknowledge no other law, rule, power, Authority or dominion, than that which is instituted by me, the great I Am, And no other government, Kingdom, Dominion, authority, power, rule, or law, shall be acknowledged by my people.

Art. 2nd. I the Lord will do nothing but what I have revealed or shall reveal unto my servants the prophets and I have appointed one man, holding the keys and authority, pertaining to my holy priesthood, to whom I will reveal my laws, my statutes, my ordinances, my Judgements, my will and pleasure concerning my kingdom on the earth.

Art. 3rd. And my Servant and Prophet whom I have called and chosen shall have power to appoint Judges and

officers in my kingdom, And my people shall have the right to choose or refuse those officers and judges, by common consent: And the judges who shall be approved by my people shall condemn the guilty, and let the innocent go free! And shall have power to execute, and shall execute, justice and judgement in righteousness, and punish transgressors throughout all my kingdom on the earth; and if the judges or officers transgress, they shall be punished according to my laws.—<sup>34</sup>

As Richards finished reading the draft constitution, fellow committee member John Taylor arose and apologized for the incompleteness of what they had produced. Indeed, the committee felt that trying to write a constitution for the kingdom of God was “treading on holy ground.” After investigating the laws of other nations, they concluded that they could not “refer to any constitution of the world because they are corrupt.” Furthermore, in their efforts they had become convinced, as Joseph had predicted, that “there is no constitution or law calculated for the universal good of the universal world but those principles which emanate from God. If they can get intelligence from God they can write correct principles, if not, they cannot.” Taylor went on to explain that “he was always convinced that no power can guide us right but the wisdom of God.” Because of his conviction the committee felt they would need a revelation from God to reveal the “first principles of the Kingdom of God.” Taylor compared their first steps in creating the political kingdom of God on earth to the first steps in the Restoration of the Gospel. “No one,” Taylor explained, “knew how to baptize or lay on hands untill it was revealed” through Joseph Smith. If direct revelation from God had been necessary to bring religious truth to the earth, then the same must be true for political truth, because “national affairs are equally as far fallen and degenerate as religious matters.”<sup>35</sup>

As discussion of the draft constitution continued, Erastus Snow offered a mild critique on the phraseology that “God hath created all men free and equal” because “millions of our fellow men are born in

bondage, they never enjoyed a breath of liberty."<sup>36</sup> This criticism of slavery echoed what Joseph Smith had set forth just a few months previous in his published presidential platform. Indeed, Joseph opened that document by discussing how troubled he was that while the Declaration of Independence declared all men are created equal and endowed with liberty but that "some two or three millions of people are held as slaves for life, because the spirit in them is covered with a darker skin than ours."<sup>37</sup> As the discussion on this point progressed in the council, Joseph reiterated that "all men were in the designs of God created equal, and inasmuch as some had greater capacities than others, it was required of them to possess the greater philanthropy."<sup>38</sup>

Remembering Joseph Smith's counsel to debate matters deeply and openly, Taylor welcomed this and any criticism of the document they had thus far produced, because they wanted to "find all the cracks they can and expose them" before it was given to President Smith. Perhaps himself musing about the preface to the Book of Commandments all those years ago, Joseph Smith told Taylor that "he did not intend to tear the thing to pieces, untill he had got the whole of it."<sup>39</sup>

At this point in the discussion, Brigham Young made a lengthy exposition of his thoughts. In an earlier meeting he had suggested that men should not need a written constitution because they should be guided by what they already knew was right and now he pressed that point. After the council had "done all we were capable to do, we could have the Lord speak and tell us what is right." While he was "willing to be ruled by the means which God will appoint," Brigham did not think a written constitution could stand the test of time. Why? Because when God gave revelation to humankind he did it "a little here and a little there" and he did not know "how much more there is in the bosom of the Almighty. When God sees that his people have enlarged upon what he has given us[,] he will give us more." To illustrate his point through exaggeration, Young asserted that he would "not be stumbled if the prophet should translate the bible forty thousand times over and yet it should be different in some places

every time, because when God speaks, he always speaks according to the capacity of the people. . . . We may say we will have a constitution because it is fashionable, but [I] would rather have the revelations to form a constitution from . . . [I] would rather have the pure revelations of Jesus Christ as they now stand, to carry to the nations, than any thing else.”<sup>40</sup>

As the debate over the constitution continued, Joseph Smith delivered some key instructions that were to inform their deliberations, especially in relation to what the expectation of the Lord was of those that were believers and participants in his forthcoming kingdom. “There is a distinction between the Church of God and kingdom of God,” he began, “The laws of the kingdom are not designed to effect our salvation hereafter. It is an entire, distinct and separate government.” Joseph continued to explain that the kingdom of God they intended to create, whether in Texas or in Mexico, would be a political entity. It would protect the members of the Church in their freedom to worship as they chose, but it would also protect those who wanted to worship God and Christ in their own way. “The church is a spiritual matter and a spiritual kingdom, but the kingdom which Daniel saw was not a spiritual kingdom; but was designed to be got up for the safety and salvation of the saints by protecting them in their religious rights and worship.”<sup>41</sup>

Joseph Smith envisioned a kingdom that followed the revelations of the prophet with the consent of the people—“a Theodemocracy”—but that kingdom would also “tolerate man in the worship of his God” because the Church was “never designed to govern men in civil matters. The kingdom of God has nothing to do with giving commandments to damn a man spiritually. It only has power to make a man amenable to his fellow man.” For Joseph, and for those in the council, the relationship between the Church of Christ and the kingdom of God was a matter of sincere and sustained discussion. As the Latter-day Saints anticipated the Second Coming of Christ, they expected the eventual reign of Jesus on earth. Article 1 in this draft of the constitution makes it clear that the expected outcome of the

council’s work would not be the rule of law but the rule of God upon the earth, which, for the council, was closely connected to Christ’s work in very real ways. While some other Christians expected a rapturous and sudden entrance into the Millennium, the council sought to marry their theological understanding of God’s sovereignty with their ability to bring real social and political change to the world they experienced in 1844. Some of the council members’ thoughts on the relationship of church and kingdom are visible through an exchange among council members in the spring of 1844. During the 18 April 1844 meetings of the council, Elder Erastus Snow articulated one aspect of the project they were hoping to see materialize:

The object is to ameliorate the condition of the human family. Get them so that you can preach the gospel to them, and get them to be baptized for the remission of sins; the influence of Gods kingdom is thereby exerted over them. They have been rebuked by this means; they acknowledge the government of Jehovah and submit to its laws, and yield obedience to its officers. He has been led to think that this work is not to be the work of a moment. After the Jews have come to Jerusalem &c then shall the heathen begin to learn of Jehovah, and the principles which have actuated us in the organization of this kingdom. When they have obeyed the first principles of the gospel they rise one step higher and then receive the order of the priesthood and go on from step to step.<sup>42</sup>

In response, Elder George Adams suggested that “the establishment of the Church of God was the stepping stone to the establishment of the kingdom of God and in its organization individuals had been called who were not members of the church, and he considered this a great argument in favor of the kingdom having influence over the nations of the earth.”<sup>43</sup>

The end-of-time narrative, on which the Latter-day Saints so heavily focused through the ongoing revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, could not be divorced from their understanding of the

work of the council. The guidance to focus the Saints' work on specific tasks that lent themselves to the gradual building of the kingdom of God was always coupled with a dual purpose: pragmatic and eternal. Such instruction, given during the important meetings held for drafting the constitution of the kingdom, was in accordance with the message of the revelations recorded elsewhere in Restoration scripture (see, for example, Doctrine and Covenants 1:24, 38). Countless times, revelations received by Joseph reminded the Saints that only Christ was at the helm of the Restoration project, though all they received by way of the Church was administered by the chosen earthly head. The Articles and Covenants, established in connection with the foundation of the Church, make clear that the institution operates only by proper authority, delegated by Christ to do the work of the Father, to those who are appointed to administer the rites and privileges of membership in the Church. The model was established to accomplish the work necessary to bring about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. By extension, the work of God was given a new, expansive scope through the work of the Council of Fifty.

### **Theodemocracy: A Praxis of Human Toleration and Divine Ascension**

Though Joseph taught that the imminent Second Coming of the Savior was one purpose of setting up God's government and kingdom, he had taught several years earlier that when the Lord came again, the wicked or unbelievers "would Not all be Destroyed at the Coming of Christ . . . there will be wi[c]ked during" the Millennium."<sup>44</sup> Thus the work of the council was not only a practical step to provide space for the Saints to thrive but also an extension of the very theology upon which they built their community. Christ's impending earthly reign first needed human conditions to align with the broader purposes and designs of God. Zion was to be both a holy people and a holy place. The depth of the Restoration project spoke to both the practical concerns that would form a people qualified for heavenly help (see

Doctrine and Covenants 42, 45). At the same time, it connected the proper implementation of such pragmatic programs to the eschatological encounter with Jesus Christ. In fostering a protective government structure focused on religious freedom, the council found room for a broad program of social and governmental participation in the work of God. As such, this new government was calculated to protect the rights of Latter-day Saints and those of other faiths in a way that the United States government never had. Reflecting on the failure of the government to protect them from religious persecution, Joseph explained, "In relation to the constitution of the United States, there is but one difficulty, and that is, the constitution provides the things which we want but lacks the power to carry the laws into effect. We want to alter it so as to make it imperative on the officers to enforce the protection of all men in their rights."<sup>45</sup>

Joseph Smith, having long experienced intolerance at the hands of local, state, and federal officials, had deep conviction and passion for religious tolerance. Indeed, Nauvoo had passed an ordinance in 1841 declaring, "Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Latter-day Saints, Quakers, Episcopalians, Universalists, Unitarians, Mohammedans [Muslims], and all other religious sects and denominations whatever, shall have free toleration, and equal privileges in this city." The law levied punishments for those who sought to disrupt this freedom of worship. Violators would face a considerable fine, and a possible prison term of six months could be the punishment for "any person be guilty of ridiculing, abusing, or otherwise depreciating another, in consequence of his religion, or of disturbing, or interrupting, any religious meeting."<sup>46</sup>

Now with the Saints facing new threats of eradication from their Nauvoo home and contemplating a desperate exodus out of the United States itself into some unknown and unsettled territory as a result of religious intolerance, Joseph Smith would not abide this kind of intolerance in the kingdom of God that Christ wanted them to establish.<sup>47</sup> In his lengthiest recorded discourse to the Council of Fifty, Joseph made a particular point to the men that there were

members of the council and there would be members of the planned kingdom of God who were not members of the Church “nor profess any creed or religious sentiment whatever.” The kingdom of God Joseph envisioned did not evaluate men on “their religious opinions or notions in any shape or form whatever” and upheld that “we act upon the broad and liberal principal that all men have equal rights, and ought to be respected, and that every man has a privilege in this organization of choosing for himself voluntarily his God, and what he pleases for his religion.” Joseph believed that as people investigated the various religious truth claims, they would eventually “embrace the greatest light.” At any rate, a compulsion in religious belief defeated the purpose of mortality because “God cannot save or damn a man [except] on the principle that every man acts, chooses and worships for himself.”<sup>48</sup>

As Joseph continued this discourse, he raised the grim specter of the carnage associated with religious wars in world history. He declared to the men “the importance of thrusting from us every spirit of bigotry and intollerance toward a mans religious sentiments, that spirit which has drenched the earth with blood.” Animated, perhaps, as he thought of the Saints’ own suffering at the hands of the intolerant, Joseph made clear his feelings on religious bigotry to council members: “I will appeal to every man in this council beginning at the youngest that when he arrives to the years of Hoary age he will have to say that the principles of inollrance and bigotry never had a place in this kingdom, nor in my breast, and that he is even then ready to die rather than to yield to such things.” Compulsion and persecution could not “reclaim the human mind from its ignorance, bigotry and superstition.”<sup>49</sup>

Turning from the grand universal principle to a more personal reflection on it, Joseph Smith taught them that he did not choose his friends on the basis of their Church membership or lack thereof. Displaying the guiding aspect of mercy in his nature, Joseph poignantly taught, “We must not despise a man on account of infirmity. We ought to love a man more for his infirmity. . . . If I can know



that a man susceptible of good feelings & integrity will stand by his friends, he is my friend." Then, perhaps with a premonition of his own impending death, Joseph added mournfully, "The only thing I am afraid of is that I will not live long enough to enjoy the society of these my friends." For Joseph, friendship was a divine principle, and Jesus Christ expected those relationships to extend beyond those that shared religious beliefs. To prove the point, he said, "When I have used every means in my power to exalt a mans mind, and have taught him righteous principles to no effect [and] he is still inclined in his darkness, yet the same principles of liberty and charity would ever be manifested by me as though he [had] embraced [the Gospel]." "Let us," he implored, "drive from us every species of intollerance."<sup>50</sup>

William Clayton recorded that while Joseph passionately spoke, he had a ruler in his hand that he struck over and over again for effect until finally, near the end of his discourse, the ruler snapped in two. Without missing a beat, Brigham Young grabbed the imagery and declared, "So might every tyrannical government be broken before us."<sup>51</sup>

The revelation that W. W. Phelps had initially asked for, that John Taylor had subsequently sought, and that Brigham Young relied solely upon finally came on 25 April 1844 as the council met again to discuss the constitution for the kingdom of God. Joseph spoke the revelation in the voice of the Jesus Christ: "Verily thus saith the Lord, ye are my constitution and I am your God, and ye are my spokesmen. From henceforth do as I shall command you. Saith the Lord." The brief revelation was immediately and unanimously accepted as the government of the kingdom of God.<sup>52</sup>

Brigham Young's sentiment that the new kingdom should be governed by simple obedience to the continuing revelations of God was validated in this second revelation to Joseph Smith received in the Council of Fifty. The lack of a written constitution necessitated that the group would have to continually rely on ongoing prophetic utterance and revelation, trusting that Jesus Christ would lead his Church and his kingdom "here a little and there a little" (2 Nephi 28:30) as circumstances dictated and Brigham had earlier opined.

## Conclusion

Little did Brigham Young know that just two months later Joseph Smith would be dead, martyred before he could enjoy the society of his friends in the hoped-for kingdom of God. It fell to Brigham to carry out the imperatives of these two revelations from God and the teachings of Joseph Smith regarding the Saints' removal to a new land. When the grieving council members met again in early 1845, embittered by yet another failure of the United States and its boasted democracy in meting out retribution to the murderers of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, they took up the same measures that Joseph had been working on at the time of his death. As they prepared for an exploratory expedition, Brigham Young commented, "We know this was one of Josephs measures and my feelings are, if we cannot have the priviledge of carrying out Josephs measures I would rather lie down and have my head cut off at once. . . . While Joseph was living it seems as though he was hurried by the Lord all the time, and especially for the last year. It seemed he laid out work for this church which would last them twenty years to carry out. I used to wonder why it was that he used to be hurried so, not supposing he was going to die, but now I understand the reason."<sup>53</sup>

The task of putting into practice the teachings and revelations of Joseph Smith fell upon Brigham Young, and despite the difficulties that accompanied the monumental task, he always maintained Joseph's desires as his guiding star. He told the men of the council, "To carry out Josephs measures is sweeter to me than honey."<sup>54</sup> Although Brigham had not known it when Joseph was teaching the council, he would be the one waiting on the line-by-line revelation of the Lord as the Saints left the United States, moving to northern Mexico and into an unknown future.

Brigham Young's succession to the presidency solidified the practice that Latter-day Saints would receive both spiritual and temporal guidance from their prophet in ways that had been at least intended, if not modeled, in the Council of Fifty's plan to build the kingdom

of God on earth. The Saints continued to look forward to a time when the long-prophesied city of Zion would be built and they would receive the associated blessings. While the immediate imperative of building the City of Zion and establishing a functioning theodemocracy ebbed with the tides of the next several decades, the final revelations and teachings of Joseph Smith left an indelible imprint on the men who formed the Council. The Lord’s kingdom would be both a people and a place. Over the next three decades of his life, Brigham would fervently attempt put into practice what he believed were the intentions and teachings that Joseph had received from the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

## Notes

1. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 18 April 1844, Matthew J. Grow, Ronald K. Esplin, Mark Ashurst-McGee, Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, and Jeffrey D. Mahas, eds., *Council of Fifty, Minutes, March 1844–January 1846*, vol. 1 of the Administrative Records series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Ronald K. Esplin, Matthew J. Grow, and Matthew C. Godfrey (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2016), 124; hereafter cited as *JSP*, CFM.
2. Similar language connecting the temporary kingdom and the eternal kingdom occurs in Revelation 3:1, “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”
3. Antebellum politicians’ avowal of state versus federal rights was often applied conveniently, depending on the issue at hand. As historian Matthew Karp has recently reiterated in his work, Southern slave-holding politicians like Calhoun and those that defended slavery in the Democratic Party generally invoked state’s rights when it suited them but were really nationalists that often championed federal power “when the question involved the national government’s direct relationship to slavery.” Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 5. Then men like Calhoun “eagerly embraced the proslavery clout of the federal government.” Joseph Smith recognized this hypocrisy and responded to Calhoun’s rejection by mockingly restating Calhoun’s avowed

position vis-à-vis the Latter-day Saints, “[a state] can exile you at pleasure, mob you with impunity; confiscate your lands and property; have the legislature sanction it: yea, even murder you, as an edict of an Emperor, and it does no wrong, for the noble senator of South Carolina, says the power of the federal government is so limited and specific that it has no jurisdiction of the case. Joseph Smith to John C. Calhoun, 2 January 1844, Joseph Smith Collection, MS 155, box 2, folder 7, 4, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter cited as CHL.

4. Patrick Q. Mason, *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 7.
5. Joseph Smith to John C. Calhoun, 4 November 1843, Joseph Smith Collection, MS 155, box 2, folder 6, 34, CHL.
6. Senator Lewis Cass to General Joseph Smith, 9 December 1843, Joseph Smith Collection, MS 155, box 3, folder 4, 68–69, CHL.
7. “Remarks on the Above,” *Warsaw Message* (IL), 17 January 1844.
8. Joseph Smith, Journal, 20 February 1844, Joseph Smith Collection, MS 155, box 1, folder 7, 276, CHL.
9. Joseph’s First Vision experience made clear for the Saints by 1844 that theirs was a heretical Christian movement when measured against the creedal definition of Jesus the Son and God the Father. The physical nature of Jesus mirrored the physical nature of the Father, and both natures were reflected in the physicality of human creation.
10. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 18 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:111.
11. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 11 March 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:40. It is important to note that in 1844 the entire area of Mexico encompassing modern-day Nevada, Utah, Colorado, and California was all designated “California” or “Upper California.”
12. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 11 March 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:42.
13. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 10 March 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:39.
14. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 10 March 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:39.
15. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 11 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:79.
16. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 11 March 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:43.
17. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 11 March 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:42.

18. Council of Fifty, "Record," 10 March 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:44; and Minutes of Discussion, Council of Fifty, Papers, 1845–1883, CHL, as quoted therein.
19. Council of Fifty, "Record," 14 March 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:48.
20. Council of Fifty, "Record," 5 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:81.
21. Brigham Young, Journal, 4 February 1845, CFR 1234 1, CHL; *JSP*, CFM:20.
22. William P. McIntire, Notebook, CHL. There is no date for this entry, but context suggests it is 9 March 1841. Joseph had taught that Ahman was "the name of God in pure Language" in 1832. "Sample of Pure Language, between circa 4 and circa 20 March 1832," p. 144, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/sample-of-pure-language-between-circa-4-and-circa-20-march-1832/1>.
23. "Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by Wilford Woodruff," p. [135], The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-wilford-woodruff/3>.
24. Council of Fifty, "Record," 11 March 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:54.
25. Council of Fifty, "Record," 4 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:78–79.
26. Council of Fifty, "Record," 5 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:80–82, 84.
27. Council of Fifty, "Record," 11 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:91.
28. Council of Fifty, "Record," 11 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:91.
29. Council of Fifty, "Record," 11 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:91. Phelps possibly had in memory another time that a committee similarly struggled on a vastly important document. Just a year after the Church was founded, preparations were well underway to publish many of Joseph Smith's revelations in the Book of Commandments. Phelps was the printer heading up the effort, and William E. McLellan, Sidney Rigdon, and Oliver Cowdery had been appointed to write the preface of the sacred book. According to McLellan, when they "made their report" to a November 1831 Church conference, the assembled members "picked it all to pieces. The Conference then requested Joseph to enquire of the Lord about it, and he said that he would if the people would bow in prayer with him. This they did and Joseph prayed." Following the prayer, "Joseph dictated by the Spirit the preface found in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants" there in the same room with the conference attendees. In a rare broadly public display of the

reception of a revelation, Joseph Smith would “deliver a few sentences and Sydney would write them down, then read them aloud, and if correct, then Joseph would proceed and deliver more, and by this process the preface was given.” Letter from W. H. Kelley, *The Saints’ Herald*, 1 March 1882. Though the Book of Commandments’ publication was stopped by violent mob attacks in 1833 and the pages strewn in the streets of Independence, the revelation Joseph Smith received as the preface to the book remained the first section of the subsequently published Doctrine and Covenants.

30. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 11 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:91.
31. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 11 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:91–92.
32. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 11 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:92.
33. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 11 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:93–94.
34. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 18 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:110–14. The draft attempted to make sense of the future kingdom by seeing the component parts pulled together across vast expanses of time and space. For instance, the Constitution compared “the murderous Cain” to Gov. Lilburn W. Boggs, thus quickly closing the gap of a few thousand years. The draft constitution deliberately attempted to connect past and present dispensations of time.
35. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 18 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:114.
36. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 18 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:117.
37. *General Smith’s Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United State* (Nauvoo: Printed by John Taylor, 1844), CHL.
38. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 18 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:118.
39. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 18 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:118–19.
40. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 18 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:120.
41. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 18 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:128.
42. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 18 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:124.
43. Council of Fifty, “Record,” 18 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:125.
44. Discourse, 16 March 1841, Brent M. Rogers, Mason K. Allred, Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, and Brett D. Dowdle, eds., *Documents Volume 8: February–November 1841*, vol. 8 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Ronald K. Esplin, Matthew J. Grow, Matthew C. Godfrey, and R. Eric Smith (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2019), 75.

45. Council of Fifty, "Record," 18 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:128.
46. Minutes, 1 March 1841, in *JSP*, D8:52.
47. The sentiment against the Latter-day Saints was often so virulent that even after the majority of the Saints departed Nauvoo, one newspaper made clear that they wanted the nation completely cleansed from the Latter-day Saint stain: "We want to see a clean sweep made of Mormons and all their hangers on. Let every vestige and trace of the accursed system that has afflicted our county for years be eradicated; and not one living monument left to bring it again to remembrance." "All Mormons Must Leave," *The Janesville Gazette*, 24 January 1848.
48. Council of Fifty, "Record," 11 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:97.
49. Council of Fifty, "Record," 11 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:99–100.
50. Council of Fifty, "Record," 11 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:99–100.
51. Council of Fifty, "Record," 11 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:100.
52. Council of Fifty, "Record," 15 April 1844, in *JSP*, CFM:137.
53. Council of Fifty, "Record," 1 March 1845, in *JSP*, CFM:257.
54. Council of Fifty, "Record," 1 March 1845, in *JSP*, CFM:257.