

government in the Great Basin. But what interested council members most was, not their specific duties, but the expectation that the council represented something much larger: it was a working demonstration of the principles and pattern for a future KINGDOM OF GOD on earth. The Church already had a well-developed apocalyptic outlook, including belief in the latter-day collapse of existing governments before Christ's return. In this framework, the Council of Fifty was viewed as the seed of a new political order that would rule, under Christ, following the prophesied cataclysmic events of the last days.

The council, therefore, did not challenge existing systems of law and government (even in Nauvoo), but functioned more as a private organization learning to operate in a pluralistic society. Its exercise of actual political power was modest, but provided a symbol of the future theocratic kingdom of God. Always, the Fifty functioned under the FIRST PRESIDENCY and the QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES, who were also members of the council.

After the westward migration and the early pioneer period, the Council of Fifty largely disappeared as a functioning body, except for a brief resurgence during John TAYLOR's presidency when the Church again faced intense political challenges. Still, the Saints found consolation in the belief that one day, when the Savior returned, the Council of Fifty, or a council based on its principles, would rise again to govern the world under the King of Kings.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Andrus, Hyrum L. *Joseph Smith and World Government*. Salt Lake City, 1958.
- Ehat, Andrew F. "It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God." *BYU Studies* 20 (Spring 1980):253-79.
- Hansen, Klaus J. *Quest for Empire*. East Lansing, Mich., 1967.
- Quinn, D. Michael. "The Council of Fifty and Its Members, 1844 to 1945." *BYU Studies* 20 (Winter 1980):163-97.

KENNETH W. GODFREY

COUNCIL OF THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Each week the two presiding quorums of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints meet

jointly as the Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Meeting in a room in the Salt Lake Temple, this council discusses and decides all major Church appointments and policy matters.

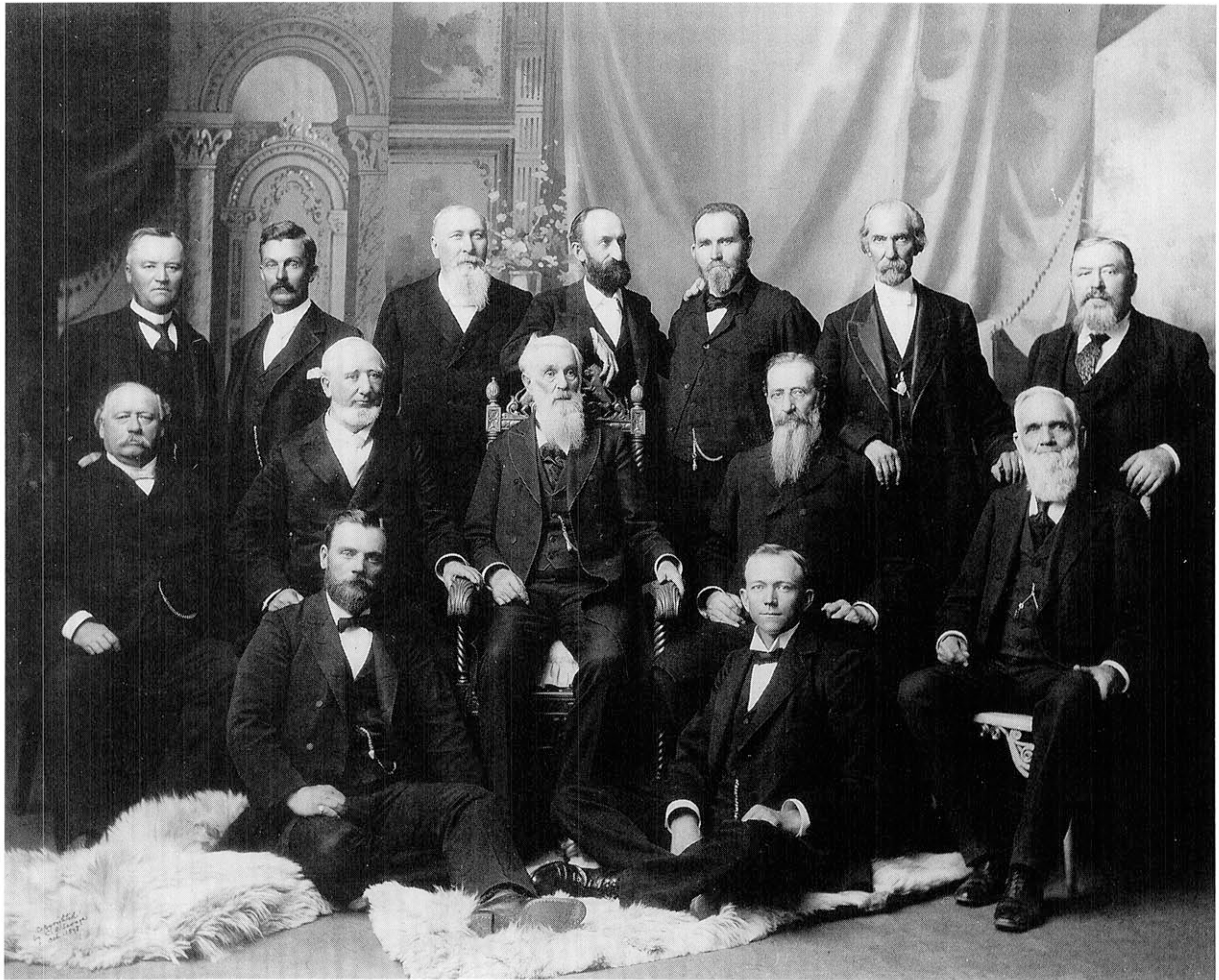
The presiding members in this council are the FIRST PRESIDENCY, consisting of the PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH, who has ultimate authority for all matters in the Church, and his counselors, who assist him in directing the affairs of the Church. The Council also includes the QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES. The members of these two quorums are the only men on earth who hold all the KEYS, or authorization, of the priesthood, and only they are sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators for the Church.

N. Eldon Tanner, counselor to four Church Presidents, said, "It is in this body [the Council] that any change in administration or policy is considered and approved, and it then becomes the official policy of the Church" (Tanner, 1979, p. 47). Responsibilities of the Council include such matters as approval of new bishops; changes in ward, stake, mission, and temple boundaries and organizations; and approval of general officers and central administration of the auxiliary organizations of the Church, such as the Primary, Sunday School, and Relief Society.

The order and procedure of the Council are rarely discussed in public, but can be inferred from published accounts of the process by which a revelation was announced in 1978. After a considerable period of prayer and discussion among the General Authorities, President Spencer W. KIMBALL felt inspired to extend eligibility for the priesthood to all worthy male members of the Church. He first presented it to his counselors, who accepted and approved it, and then to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The same inspiration came to the members of the Council, who then approved it unanimously (McConkie, p. 128). After the Council had sustained the President in this action, the revelation was subsequently presented to all other GENERAL AUTHORITIES and to the general membership of the Church, who approved it unanimously (Tanner, 1978).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- McConkie, Bruce R. "The New Revelation on Priesthood." In *Priesthood*. Salt Lake City, 1981.



The Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (as of 1898–1901). On floor: Matthias F. Cowley, Abraham O. Woodruff. Seated (left to right): Brigham Young, Jr., George Q. Cannon, President Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith, Franklin D. Richards. Standing (left to right): Anthon H. Lund, John W. Taylor, John Henry Smith, Heber J. Grant, Francis M. Lyman, George Teasdale, Marriner W. Merrill.

Tanner, N. Eldon. "Revelation on Priesthood Accepted, Church Officers Sustained." *Ensign* 8 (Nov. 1978):16–17.

———. "The Administration of the Church." *Ensign* 9 (Nov. 1979):42–48.

W. KEITH WARNER

COUNCIL IN HEAVEN

The Council in Heaven, sometimes called the Grand Council, refers to a meeting of God the Father with his spirit sons and daughters to discuss the terms and conditions by which these spirits could come to earth as physical beings. The terms "Council in Heaven" and "Grand Council" do not

appear in the scriptures, but are used by the Prophet Joseph SMITH in referring to these pre-mortal activities, allusions to which are found in many scriptures (Job 38:4–7; Jer. 1:5; Rev. 12:3–7; Alma 13:3–9; D&C 29:36–38; 76:25–29; Moses 4:1–4; Abr. 3:23–28; cf. *TPJS*, pp. 348–49, 357, 365; *T&S* 4 [Feb. 1, 1843]:82).

One purpose of the heavenly council was to allow the spirits the opportunity to accept or reject the Father's PLAN OF SALVATION, which proposed that an earth be created whereon his spirit children could dwell, each in a PHYSICAL BODY. Such a life would serve as a probationary state "to see if they [would] do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (Abr. 3:25). The spirits of all mankind were free to accept or reject