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Joseph Smith and World Government by Hyrum L. Andrus

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Joseph Smith and World Government. By Hyrum L. Andrus.
Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1958. 127 pp., \$1.75.

As part of the latter-day "restitution of all things," a constitution for a political Kingdom of God was revealed to Joseph Smith. The political kingdom with its "Government of God," as the facts have been reconstructed by Dr. Andrus, was supposed to grow "out of the Church" and be subject to the ultimate rule of the priesthood. All officers of the government were to be nominated by priesthood authority, and citizens of the kingdom would "recognize the will and dictation of the Almighty" as revealed to Church leaders. Nevertheless, the political and spiritual kingdoms were to be distinct entities, with "a constitutional separation of powers between Zion and the political government." Being republican, representative and democratic,

the government would also hold individual rights and freedoms inviolate. The role of political parties in selecting candidates would "naturally" (and with good riddance) be eliminated. As the government expanded to encompass the earth, it was to assume a federal form, with respect for local customs, religion, and cultural patterns. Excluding the church and state relationship, the government would bear a striking similarity to the United States constitutional system as conceived by the Founding Fathers.

Because the revealed constitution is now nowhere to be found, and Joseph Smith was never able to inaugurate the "Government of God" in more than rudimentary form, the author's task of reconstructing Joseph Smith's concept of "world government" is exceedingly difficult. Recognizing the limitations of the source material, Dr. Andrus deals with the subject only in his first chapter. The remaining two-thirds of this slender volume relates to the organization and activities of the General Council, or Council of Fifty, which may have been a first step toward the political kingdom but certainly was not world government.

As an historical account of the Council of Fifty, the work successfully if somewhat tediously defends the proposition that the Council had an important role in directing the exodus from Nauvoo and the early civil government of Utah. In the exegesis of world government, however, hard facts seem more desperately difficult to come by. The reader lays down the volume with only a hazy notion of what Joseph Smith had in mind, and with an abiding wish that the missing revelation would appear to dispel the fog. Moreover, Dr. Andrus fails to offer really critical evaluation of the available fragments of evidence. To speak, for instance, of a "separation of powers" between Church and state when both are directed by the priesthood is nonsensical.

More distressing still is the author's uncritical endorsement of what he terms Joseph Smith's "brilliant analysis of man's inability to govern himself." This strikes at the very foundations of liberal democratic government, which must stand or fall on the postulate of the individual's capacity for self-government. Theoretically, democratic government may be inferior to gov-

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ernment by the few who are wise and virtuous. All the more should we agree with Joseph Smith that a government of God would be superior to a government of man. In this world of fallible men, however, the postulates underlying rule by the virtuous few have generally proved incongruous with reality. To Dr. Andrus' credit, certainly, is his recognition that the political Government of God appears workable only when men approach perfection or when Christ comes to reign personally upon the earth.

Robert E. Riggs