



Aerial view of the Independence temple lot in the foreground with a view of the city center in the background. Photograph courtesy Intellectual Reserve.

Location Veneration: Independence, Missouri, in Latter-day Saint Zionist Tradition and Thought

Alonzo L. Gaskill

Since 1831, Independence, Missouri, has held a position of significance in the theology of the Restoration. To this day, many Restoration Latter Day Saint churches continue to see it as sacred, either for Joseph Smith's declaration that it was once the Garden of Eden, or because he decreed it to be the site where a holy temple would be erected, or because it was designated as a place of gathering for the Saints (or all of the above). Today, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, members of the Community of Christ (formerly RLDS), the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) (i.e., Hedrickites), the Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerites), and several other Restoration groups have a presence in Independence venerating it as a place of significance for believers in the restoration of the gospel as revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

The idea of venerating sacred ground, or a sacred place, is not unique to those of the Restoration traditions. Throughout history, kings, priests, and peasants have sought interaction with the divine. When the transcendental occurred, they would often erect an altar or monument to commemorate the occasion, and also as a testament to their sense of the hallowed nature of the location in which the divine revealed Himself. Such locations typically became places of pilgrimage for the faithful. Sacred places serve as a "focus-

ALONZO L. GASKILL (alg@byu.edu) is an associate professor of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University, where his teaching emphasis is World Religions and Christian history. He holds a BA in philosophy from Idaho State University, an MA in theology from Notre Dame, and a PhD in Biblical studies from Trinity University. A convert to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he was reared near Independence, Missouri, as a practicing member of the Greek Orthodox faith. His research interests include symbolism, LDS temples, and comparative religion.

ing lens” of sorts.¹ They are a constant reminder to pilgrims and patrons of a tradition’s past, but also of its chosen status.

In the Abrahamic traditions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—the concepts of sacred space and sacred place are prevalent and enduring. The Western (“Wailing”) Wall, Mecca and Medina, and the Holy Sepulcher are persistent places of pilgrimage. For practitioners, locations of veneration hold a place of profundity for their past significance, but also because they offer hope for a bright future; a future that potentially brings again the transcendental experience akin to that which took place there in days past. Each of the Abrahamic faiths has expectations of what God will do with, through, and for them if they hold out faithful.

As suggested, the various religious communities associated with Joseph Smith hold Independence, Missouri, as a sacral location of significance and veneration for different reasons. Certainly, each has its own history in that locality, and each has its own theology about what *did* and *will* happen there. Our focus in this article is on the LDS Church; its history and thought regarding the significance of Independence, Missouri, and its place in the “gathering of Israel” (Article of Faith 10).

While the Community of Christ has a much more visible presence in Independence than does the Utah-based faith, many members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints nevertheless have a fixation on Independence, not only as a place of pilgrimage, but also as a location they venerate because of a long-held belief that at one point they would return to Missouri, transferring their headquarters from Utah to Jackson County. Where does this belief originate, and is this an accurate perception of the doctrine or position of the LDS Church? Has there been an evolution in the official position on this matter?

Joseph Smith and the Mormon Missouri Doctrine

One of the greatest single contributions Joseph Smith made to the religious traditions of nineteenth-century Christianity was the assertion of a native sacred history for the Western hemisphere, a history described in the Book of Mormon. With the introduction of the “new scripture,” Joseph offered the Americas as the “chosen land” which God had prepared for scattered Israel, and for the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the Book of Mormon indicates that the consecrated and sacred nature of the Americas was revealed by God to prophets millennia before the arrival of European explorers. Smith’s revelations expounded the virtues of the American Zion, indicating the principles of religious freedom that would largely define the land.

Portions of Joseph Smith's teachings on this subject were not unique to him or the restoration.² One scholar noted: "The saints did not invent the concept of America as chosen; it surrounded America's Puritan beginnings."³ Nevertheless, what Smith restored, and what the Book of Mormon articulated, convinced many in the early days of the restoration that this common belief of America's "choseness" was true.⁴ Others held much this same view, but a great deal of what the Prophet revealed went beyond the understandings or beliefs of those outside the newly restored faith. For example, Smith provided the context of communication with the divine in the American Zion by narrating its history. It became the place where God first spoke to man (i.e., the Garden of Eden⁵) and where Christ would return and speak during both the restoration and the millennium, for "out of Zion shall go forth the law" (Isaiah 2:3). The fact that the Mormon city of Zion was to primarily be a temple city⁶ exemplifies its divine communicative symbolism, a place where the throne of God can be approached. (This idea was paramount in Joseph Smith's mind, but not necessarily clear in the minds of all his followers.) As he explained in June 1843:

The object of Gathering the . . . people of God in any age of the world . . . was to build unto the Lord an house whereby he Could reveal unto his people the ordinances of his house and glories of his kingdom & teach the people the ways of salvation. For their [*sic*] are certain ordinances & principles that when they are taught and practiced [*sic*], must be done in a place or house built for that purpose. This was purposed in the mind of God before the world was & it was for this purpose that God . . . gathers together the people in the last days to build unto the Lord an house to prepare them for the ordinances & endowment washings & anointings &c.⁷

For Joseph Smith, Zion could not exist aside from the temple. Hence, in 1831 he dedicated a spot for a temple in Independence, Missouri (which, had not the Saints been expelled, would have eventually been constructed). When the Saints collected in Kirtland, Ohio, he had them construct a temple. In July 1838, Church leaders laid cornerstones for a temple at Far West, Missouri, and in the fall of 1838, a temple was planned and a site dedicated at Adam-ondi-Ahman. Finally, the Saints assembled in western Illinois, more particularly in Nauvoo, where once again they built a temple. For the early Latter-day Saints, the temple and Zion went hand-in-glove.

"We ought to have the building up of Zion as our greatest object," Joseph Smith declared in 1839.⁸ One year earlier Smith received a revelation admonishing the Saints to "Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations; And that the gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes, may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth" (D&C 115:5–6). Thus, one of the chief components of the

gathering to this “promised land” of North America was protection. Zion was to provide a “defense” and “refuge” for members of the fledgling Church—protection from their enemies, but also from the sins and evils of a fallen world (D&C 45:65–71).⁹ Through gathering to Zion the Saints would quickly come to realize an additional influence of being part of that holy society, namely its influence on the lives, faith, and purity of the inhabitants. An August 1833 revelation declared: “Therefore, verily, thus saith the Lord, let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn” (D&C 97:21).

While the Prophet’s early conversations about Zion highlighted the Book of Mormon teaching that God had established the Americas as a “choice land” (see 2 Nephi 10:19), over time Joseph Smith introduced into his discourse details regarding a small portion of the central United States. This new level of detail in the Zion doctrine may have come in part from Smith’s early 1830s work on the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. In the process of doing his revision he learned about the prototypical city of Zion built by the prophet Enoch.¹⁰ It was also revealed that Zion encompassed (at the very least) North America, but more specifically a location within the boundaries of Missouri. Joseph Smith wrote:

Having received, by an heavenly vision, a commandment, in June [1831] . . . to take my journey to the western boundaries of the State of Missouri, and there designate the very spot, which was to be the central spot, for the commencement of the gathering together of those who embrace the fulness of the everlasting gospel—I accordingly undertook the journey, with certain ones of my brethren, and, after a long and tedious journey, suffering many privations and hardships, I arrived in Jackson county, Missouri; and, after viewing the country, seeking diligently at the hand of God, he manifested himself unto me, and designated to me and others, the very spot upon which he designed to commence the work of the gathering, and the upbuilding of an holy city, which should be called Zion:—Zion because it is a place of righteousness, and all who build thereon, are to worship the true and living God— and all believe in one doctrine even the doctrine of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.¹¹

In revealing the location of the western Zion, Smith not only gave the Saints a location where they should gather, but he also restored the concepts of “sacred place” and “location veneration” which had been so prevalent in antiquity.

Emotional Implications of Zion’s Failure

The idea of a city implies forethought, planning, and order. Thus the “City of Zion” was really symbolic of the divine ordering of human disorder. It seems evident from history that this is what Joseph Smith sought to

accomplish. Unfortunately, during fall of 1833, the citizens of Jackson County forcibly removed the Mormons from the region and the anticipated establishment of Zion was not realized. Many factors played a role—personal selfishness, a lack of prompt and faithful attention to divine instruction, religious intolerance by nonbelievers, economic impoverishment, exclusivity in the Saints’ economic model, and mobocracy. In the end, lives were lost, property destroyed, possessions confiscated, and the Independence temple site abandoned.

What must have been the implications on the psyche of the people? Had they been rejected by God? Was this expulsion a result of *their* sins? Or had the government’s thoughtless behavior brought troubles to the Saints and, more particularly, God’s wrath upon the state? No doubt persecution gave the Saints a kinship with the ancient Israelites and the first-century Christians. And while Joseph Smith’s words offered some measure of comfort, they also strongly implied that some of the fault for the Saints’ failure to establish their Missouri Zion was their own sinfulness:

The Lord will have a place whence His word will go forth, in these last days, in purity; for if Zion will not purify herself, so as to be approved of in all things, in His sight, He will seek another people; for His work will go on until Israel is gathered, and they who will not hear His voice, must expect to feel His wrath. Let me say unto you, seek to purify yourselves, and also the inhabitants of Zion, lest the Lord’s anger be kindled to fierceness. Repent, repent, is the voice of God to Zion; . . . Hear the warning voice of God, lest Zion fall, and the Lord swear in his wrath the inhabitants of Zion shall not enter into His rest. . . . Our hearts are greatly grieved at the spirit which is . . . wasting the strength of Zion like a pestilence; and if it is not detected and driven from you, it will ripen Zion for the threatened judgments of God.¹²

The expulsion of the Mormons from Jackson County in 1833, their political relocation from Clay County in 1836, and finally their removal altogether from northern Missouri in 1839, left members of the restored Church in a state of impoverishment. In addition, loss of their presence in Kirtland certainly caused some to question the revelations received by the Prophet. No doubt the destitution experienced by the Saints in Missouri and Ohio opened the door for later reinterpretations of what *Zion really* meant for the Latter-day Saints.

Missouri through the Lenses of Nauvoo and Beyond

As the Saints began to establish Nauvoo (including the temple), a large majority emotionally “moved on” and set their sights on Nauvoo as the “new Zion.” However, this emotional divesting of the Independence “New Jerusalem” was not universal. Oliver Olney, a convert to the Church during the Kirtland era, penned: “They speak of Missouri from whence we

was drove. . . . They prophesy [*sic*] in the name of the Lord that they will be six hundred thousand strong in ten years. Thus a spirit of encouragement is held out by those that lead that they will gain in numbers and become a terror to the nations of the earth. They have now sent to England and to all parts for the saints to come in and that without delay.”¹³ Olney perceived the Church as biding its time in Nauvoo while their numbers increased, with the intention to return to Missouri to reclaim their land once they were numerically large or strong enough to do so. Even Wilford Woodruff, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, wrote that some determined they would not go west in the mass migration from Illinois but instead remain in the area, “so when the church got ready to go back to Jackson County [they] would have but a short way to go.”¹⁴ This anticipation of returning to Missouri lasted for some time. As late as 1870, LDS Church leaders offered the perspective that a return to Missouri was inevitable. For example, Church patriarch John Young taught: “If the people will keep humble and do as they are told, they will . . . go back and build the Temple in the centre stake of Zion.”¹⁵ Similarly, Elder Orson Pratt declared:

There is one thing sure—as sure as the sun shines forth in yonder heavens, so sure will the Lord fulfil one thing with regard to this people. What is that? He will return them to Jackson county, and in the western part of the State of Missouri they will build up a city which shall be called Zion, which will be the head-quarters of this Latter-day Saint Church; and that will be the place where the prophets, apostles and inspired men of God will have their head-quarters. It will be the place where the Lord God will manifest Himself to His people, as He has promised in the Scriptures, as well as in modern revelation.¹⁶

Thus the view of returning to Missouri, and the eventual transference of the LDS Church’s headquarters there, continued for some time. The Saints could not readily divest themselves of the notion and the visions of vindication that accompanied a doctrine of return.

Curiously, following the death of Brigham Young in August 1877, Church leaders ceased to discuss publicly a return to Missouri. Certainly some still expected it, but formally, it disappeared from the public discourse of the presiding officers.¹⁷

In June 1894, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve began to counsel Church members *not* to immigrate to Utah, at least not “until they [were] firmly founded in the religion,” and even suggested that members “should not be encouraged to immigrate to this place.”¹⁸ Rather, they were encouraged to stay in their homelands and build up the Church. Similarly, in 1898, George Q. Cannon, a member of the LDS First Presidency, counseled the Saints in the countries where they lived to “not be anxious to . . . gather to

Zion.”¹⁹ Significantly, “Zion” at the turn of the nineteenth century was being used in reference to Utah, not Missouri.

In 1903 President Joseph F. Smith suggested that the Church begin to construct meeting houses in Great Britain, something they had not done during the first sixty years of the Church’s presence in that country.²⁰ This new building phase implied permanence to the LDS Church’s presence in Great Britain, with the hope that it would also discourage immigration to the United States. Ten years later the Church built the first temple located outside the U.S. in Cardston, Alberta, Canada.²¹ Again, the message being sent was that gathering to the Intermountain region was not necessary, and perhaps even unwanted; and marked the beginning of what would become a more aggressive temple-building program.

In the early 1950s, LDS President David O. McKay initiated the construction of temples outside of North America. Only eight months after becoming president he purchased property for a temple near London. A month later he proposed another European temple, this one in Switzerland. As he explained it, his rationale was to “contribute to the stability and growth of the Church in Europe”²²—a goal significantly different from the earlier position of seeking to get *all* of the Saints to “gather in unto one place upon the face of *this* land”—i.e., America (see D&C 29:8).

In the years that followed, a number of LDS Church leaders spoke of the place of gathering as the homeland of the convert, rather than Utah. President Spencer W. Kimball encapsulated the Church’s position this way:

Many people have been holding their breath waiting to see the gathering of Israel. We are in Israel and are being gathered. Now, in the early days of the Church we used to preach for the people to come to Utah as the gathering process, *largely because that was the only place in the whole world where there was a temple*. Now we have sixteen temples, and two more that have been approved, scattered throughout the world. So it is no longer necessary that we bring the people all to Salt Lake City. Our missionaries preach baptism and confirmation. And then we come to you with conferences and to organize stakes. So we say again, stay in Korea. This is a beautiful land. In this land you can teach your children just as well as you could in Salt Lake City. Stay in Korea where you can teach the gospel to millions of people.

And so the gathering is taking place. Korea is the gathering place for Koreans, Australia for Australians, Brazil for Brazilians, England for the English. And so we move forward toward the confirmation of this great program the Lord has established for us.

The First Presidency and the Twelve see great wisdom in the multiple Zions, many gathering places where the Saints within their own culture and nation can act as a leaven in the building of the kingdom—a kingdom which seeks no earthly rewards or treasures.

Sometimes, inadvertently, we have given artificial encouragement to individuals to leave their native land and culture and, too often, this has meant the loss of the

leaven that is so badly needed, and the individuals involved have sometimes regretted their migrations.

I am hopeful that each of you will ponder carefully what it is the Lord would have you do with your lives, with the special skills, training, and testimonies you have.²³

Similarly, Elder Bruce R. McConkie, an influential voice among the leadership of the LDS Church, taught: “The place of gathering for the Mexican Saints is in Mexico; the place of gathering for the Guatemalan Saints is in Guatemala; the place of gathering for the Brazilian Saints is in Brazil; and so it goes throughout the length and breadth of the whole earth. Japan is for the Japanese; Korea is for the Koreans; Australia is for the Australians; every nation is the gathering place for its own people.”²⁴ Today members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are consistently taught to stay where they are and build Zion in their home land, whether that is in Pittsburgh or Paris, London or Los Angeles.

While records of the LDS Church’s landholdings in Jackson County, Missouri, are not public, one can quite readily view the Church’s activities in Utah. The rate of church building on the Wasatch Front is mind boggling—Church properties everywhere, with new chapels and other facilities being dedicated weekly. A few rather significant projects have been undertaken in the last decade and a half. For example, in 1996 Church President Gordon B. Hinckley announced plans to build a facility to be known as the Conference Center.²⁵ This massive building, which “replaced” the old Mormon Tabernacle on Temple Square, seats over twenty-one thousand people, and has an auditorium large enough to hold two Boeing 747s side by side.²⁶ A building of this size and cost suggests a Church that is putting down roots, rather than preparing to uproot itself.

In October 2006 the LDS Church announced plans to renovate downtown Salt Lake City through its commercial real estate arm, Property Reserve Incorporated (PRI).²⁷ President Hinckley emphasized: “The Church is undertaking a huge development project in the interest of protecting the environment of Temple Square. While the costs will be great, it will not involve the expenditure of tithing funds.”²⁸ According to KSL, a Church-owned media outlet, the renovation cost \$5 billion dollars.²⁹ Again, evidence that the Church was settling in, not heading out.

Perhaps one of the developments most germane to this article was the October 2008 announcement by Church President Thomas S. Monson that an LDS temple would be built in the “greater Kansas City area.”³⁰ The Kansas City Missouri Temple (dedicated May 6, 2012) is approximately fifteen miles from the temple lot dedicated by Joseph Smith on August 3, 1831. To justify building another LDS temple just a few miles away would require

a membership so dense in population as to rival that of any city in the state of Utah.³¹ The Church's choice to build a temple that close to Independence, but not *in* Independence, seems to send a rather clear message as to how "non-imminent" any LDS return to Jackson County really is.³² These examples and statements certainly give the impression that the Church does not wish its members to gather to Utah, let alone Independence.

Has the Doctrine Changed?

This brief survey might cause one to ask: Has the doctrine or position of the LDS Church with regard to Missouri, changed? Is Independence somehow a "sacred place," or is it not? Was the Church, in the days of Joseph Smith, planning to build permanent headquarters in Jackson County, Missouri, to which *all* members of the Church would gather? If so, has the Church abandoned that plan? Certainly some observers have taken the stance that the Church *has* changed its position on the location of Zion—the place of gathering.³³ But does the evidence support such a conclusion? While some members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—in the nineteenth century as well as today—have held that the Church will eventually return to Jackson County *en masse*, this may stem from a combined hopeful nostalgia and a narrow view of the teachings of the Joseph Smith.

It will be remembered that in 1833 Joseph Smith prophetically said: "Brethren, . . . 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 handful of priesthood you see here tonight, but this church will fill North and South America *it will fill the world*."³⁴ Two things seem significant about this statement. First of all, the Prophet seems to foretell the confusion that would exist within the Church regarding the gathering of Israel and the building up of Zion. Second, as early as 1833, the Prophet was already talking in terms of Zion not being in one city, county, state, or even country, but existing throughout the scope of the entire earth.

In September 1835 Joseph Smith informed the Saints that God had "manifested Himself unto us, and designated, to me and others, the very spot upon which he designed to *commence* the work of the gathering."³⁵ Note that last clause: God revealed to Joseph and others that Independence, Missouri (in Jackson County) was the place where "the work of gathering" the Saints was to "commence." Independence was *not* the end of the Saints' geographic "promised land"—it was the beginning (or center) of it.

In 1838 another revelation stated: "Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations; And that the gathering together upon the

land of Zion, *and upon her stakes*, may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth” (D&C 115:5–6). That same year, Joseph Smith announced: “The time is soon coming, when no man will have any peace but in Zion *and her stakes*.”³⁶ Notice that the Prophet consistently speaks of Zion *and her stakes*. And he notes that both Jackson County (Zion) and the stakes outside of that region would function as a “defense” and “refuge” from the “storms” and “wrath” that would come upon the “whole earth.” In the midst of the coming “scourge” and “desolation,” the revelation declared that safety could be found *if* the Saints would “stand in holy places, and . . . not be moved” (D&C 45:32, emphasis added).³⁷ As early as 1831 Joseph Smith suggested that no single geographic location would provide protection from the world. The key is holiness, not geography. Thus it is clear, even before the 1838 extermination order of Governor Boggs, that Smith saw a broader picture than many have given him credit for. LDS Church President Ezra Taft Benson taught: “Holy men and holy women stand in holy places, and these holy places include our temples, our chapels, our homes, and the stakes of Zion, which are, as the Lord declares, ‘for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth’ (D&C 115:6).”³⁸

On August 6, 1842, Joseph Smith prophesied: “The Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains.”³⁹ According to Wilford Woodruff, the Prophet taught that the Church would fill the Intermountain West:

There will be tens of thousands of Latter-day Saints who will be gathered to the Rocky Mountains, and there they will open the door for the establishing of the gospel among the Lamanites, who will receive the gospel and their endowments and the blessings of God. 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*.⁴⁰

Here the Prophet not only predicts an exodus from Nauvoo, but he indicates that in the new land to which the Saints would go (i.e., the Rocky Mountains), they would build many temples and would remain there until the return of Christ. This prophetic declaration seems to indicate that, in Smith’s mind, Missouri had largely served its purpose and that the main body of the Church would not be returning. This hardly excludes some from going back at some future date, but Joseph Smith speaks of the Rockies as the main location of the Church at the time of the Second Coming, not Jackson County.

Perhaps others of Joseph Smith’s contemporaries did not fully grasp his vision of Zion and the gathering, but Brigham Young seemed to. In 1864 he

taught: “Remarks have been made as to our staying here [in Utah]. I will tell you how long we shall stay here. If we live our religion, we shall stay here in these mountains forever and forever, worlds without end, and a portion of the Priesthood will go and redeem and build up the centre Stake of Zion.”⁴¹ In 1853, in response to another’s query as to the Latter-day Saint return to Missouri, Brigham said: “When our Elders go out to preach the Gospel, they tell the people to gather to Zion. Where is it? It is at the City of the Great Salt Lake, in the Valleys of the Mountains; in the settlements of Utah Territory—there is Zion *now*.” He then added:

And what is Zion? In one sense Zion is the pure in heart. But is there a land that ever will be called Zion? Yes, brethren. What land is it? It is the land that the Lord gave to Jacob, who bequeathed it to his son Joseph, and his posterity, and they inhabit it, and that land is North and South America. That is Zion as to land, as to Territory, and location. The children of Zion have not yet much in their possession, but their territory is North and South America *to begin with*. As to the spirit of Zion, it is in the hearts of the Saints, of those who love and serve the Lord with all their might, mind, and strength.⁴²

In July 1861, Brigham Young said further: “Zion will extend, *eventually*, all over this earth. There will be no nook or corner upon the earth but what will be in Zion. It will all be Zion.”⁴³ From Young’s perspective, North and South America were the place where the gathering would “begin.” But he clearly saw Zion in broader terms. Spiritual Zion was, for him, the purity of heart found in a faithful Saint. Geographic Zion, he suggested, had become Utah, but would include North and South America, and “eventually” the entire earth. Brigham understood Joseph Smith’s construct of Zion and the gathering of Israel. And he certainly recognized that Jackson County, Missouri, was *not* the totality of the Mormon utopia. It was but a stopping place on a lengthy journey.

As suggested earlier, Joseph Smith saw the idea of Zion (and the gathering) as inextricably connected to the building of temples, particularly after May 1842, when he administered the endowment for the first time. Thus in the early days of the Church—when there were fewer temples—the Saints *needed* to gather to a singular or regional location. A September 1830 revelation read: “Wherefore the decree hath gone forth from the Father that they shall be gathered in unto *one place* upon the face of this land, *to prepare their hearts and be prepared in all things against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked* ” (D&C 29:8, emphasis added). Was that “one place” to which they were to gather the state of Missouri? Would being in Independence, Missouri, somehow “prepare their hearts and . . . all things against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the

wicked”? Or was the “one place” to gather—the “place of preparation”—actually the temple wherever it was found? From what Smith taught, it appears that there was to be a physical gathering to one singular location. But that was not necessarily Missouri; nor, for that matter, Ohio, Illinois, or Utah. Shortly after the official organization of the Church, the Prophet began to speak of the gathering as being to Zion’s “stakes” rather than to one place. And he sensed that Zion could be built up wherever a temple had been reared unto God. Smith had hoped to accomplish this in Missouri, first in Independence, but then later at Far West. Ultimately, it wasn’t until Nauvoo that he was able to accomplish his design. But the place of gathering for Smith was *not* actually a geographic location; it was a spiritual location—the holy temple. President Spencer W. Kimball articulated Joseph Smith’s doctrine of gathering, and the Doctrine and Covenants idea of “one place” to gather. As noted previously, Kimball taught that the reason members of the Church were asked (after the Nauvoo era) to gather in one place was because there was only one location where liturgically functioning temples existed—Utah. Once the LDS Church was large enough to have temples in various parts of the world, the counsel was for members to stay put, rather than to gather to the Utah or the Intermountain area. Hence he taught that “it is no longer necessary that we bring all of our people to Salt Lake City.”⁴⁴ While Joseph Smith understood this, and Brigham Young appears also to have understood it, many Latter-day Saints have not; hence the persistent view that the Church *en masse* would be returning to Independence to reclaim its inheritance and there reestablish its headquarters.

Retort

Some argue that the Doctrine and Covenants insists that at a future day every faithful member of the Church will return to Independence and participate in the ultimate establishment of Zion. In addition, there are those who see in the scriptures evidence that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will move its headquarters to Independence, Missouri, some time prior to Christ’s Second Advent. A number of passages are cited to support this position. Note the following:

Hearken, O ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together, according to my commandments, in this land, which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints. Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion. And thus saith the Lord your God, if you will receive wisdom here is wisdom. Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse (D&C 57:1–3).

This July 1831 revelation, received in Jackson County, speaks of the commandment that the Saints gather in the land of Missouri. It even goes so far as to call it the land “consecrated for the gathering” and a “land of promise.” However, the fact that it also declares Independence to be “the center place” of gathering implies that it is “a location” but not “the *only* location” of gathering. Another passage clarifies this point: “Verily this is the word of the Lord, that the city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints, *beginning* at this place, even the place of the temple” (D&C 84:4, emphasis added). One commentator has noted:

As for the New Jerusalem gathering, Independence was to be the center place, not the center stake as some are inclined to say. The symbolism of the gathering of Israel had also been used by the Prophet Isaiah: “Enlarge thy place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes” (Isaiah 22:2; 3 Nephi 22:2). In the center of the tent was normally a large pole, and cords were fastened to it, and each cord was extended to a perimeter surrounding the tent. A large tent pin or stake was driven into the ground, and the cord extended from the center pole was fastened to the stake and pulled tight to raise the tent. Thus, stakes were to be established all around Independence so that the tent of Israel, the New Jerusalem, could be equally supported on all sides.⁴⁵

The Prophet Joseph Smith also indicated that Independence “was to be the central place for the *commencement* of the gathering.”⁴⁶ Brigham Young said: “A woman in Canada asked if we thought that Jackson County would be large enough to gather all the people that would want to go to Zion. I will answer the question really as it is. Zion will extend, eventually, all over this earth. There will be no nook or corner upon the earth but what will be in Zion.”⁴⁷ Regarding the language of Doctrine and Covenants 57, Robinson and Garrett have written: “Since Zion will eventually grow to encompass all the Saints of God in all their many stakes, *Zion* is not always a very specific term geographically.”⁴⁸ Clearly Independence is where the gathering was to *begin*—not where it was to end.

D&C Section 57 demonstrates the exegetical problem associated with this subject. So often when verses are cited to prove that Independence will eventually be the permanent destination of the Saints and the Church’s headquarters, the verses do not explicitly state that. There can be no question but that at one point in the history of the Church, Independence was seen as the main place of gathering. But in case after case, where Independence is highlighted, the revelations speak of it as “a” place of gathering, the “central” place of the gathering, or the “beginning” place for the gathering.⁴⁹ LDS scripture simply does not declare Independence or Jackson County to be the *sole* or *ultimate* place of gathering.

When scriptural passages speak of gathering to “one place” these must necessarily be taken in the context of the time in which they were given, the Church’s over arching soteriology, and the teachings of Church leaders. Joseph Smith was quite clear: the temple at the center of Zion communities is the place of gathering, safety, and refuge. This concept is echoed by Monte S. Nyman, who wrote: “The people are to gather to *their* ‘one place’ in preparation for the tribulation and desolation that will come upon the wicked.”⁵⁰ Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote that the president of the Church has received the “keys” of gathering “to lead all Israel, the ten tribes included, from all the nations of the earth, coming as the prophetic word affirms, one by one and two by two, to the mountains of the Lord’s houses, there to be endowed with power from on high.”⁵¹

Conclusion

Like first-century Jews and Christians, the Prophet Joseph Smith introduced or restored a belief in the concept of Zion and a doctrine of “sacred place.” And while not all branches of the restoration movement continue to stress this concept, it was certainly prevalent among the early Saints, and it remains strong in the psyche of many Latter-day Saints.⁵²

Could Jackson County, Missouri play a significant role in some future stage of the Church’s development? Certainly! Will the Saints *en masse* return there prior to the second coming? From what Joseph Smith and Brigham Young taught, that does not appear to be so. Rather, the gathering of Israel and the establishment of Zion seem generally applicable to any location, though Independence was certainly the “beginning” place for this work. Nevertheless, the gathering seems less about location and primarily about temples and personal righteousness.⁵³ Elder Orson F. Whitney taught that “the redemption of Zion is more than the purchase or recovery of lands, the building of cities, or even the founding of nations. It is the conquest of the heart, the subjugation of the soul, the sanctifying of the flesh, the purifying and ennobling of the passions.”⁵⁴ The Prophet drew from the book of Isaiah the metaphor of a tent and its stakes: “Enlarge the place of thy *tent*, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes” (Isa. 54:2). Tents were designed to be movable, and so was the gathering place of the faithful, fondly referred to as Zion. After the organization of the Church several communities seemed to qualify for the central post that supported the rest of the Church—Kirtland, Independence, Far West, and Nauvoo. Where persecution required it, the Saints picked up and moved the tent. For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today, Salt Lake City has become the center stake, the headquarters of the

Church, and the location from which the gathering is conducted. At the same time, however, it is much more. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland recently noted: “We no longer think of Zion as where we are going to live. We think of it as how we are going to live.”⁵⁵ Similarly, Elder D. Todd Christofferson pointed out: “Zion is Zion because of the character, attributes, and faithfulness of her citizens”⁵⁶ Brigham Young had reminded the Saints: “When we conclude to make a Zion we will make it, and this work commences in the heart of each person.”⁵⁷ This broader position of the concept of Zion is further reflected in the Church’s definition of Zion as found in the *LDS Bible Dictionary*.⁵⁸

The evolution of the Zionist tradition in Mormonism developed as Church leaders and the Latter-day Saints struggled to keep in perspective and context the scriptural texts and prophetic teachings of Joseph Smith. In that process, various ideas have been put forward leading to perhaps constricted concepts and Mormon myths regarding Zion and its future.⁵⁹ Perhaps this is one reason why the Prophet concluded that “we ought to have the building up of Zion as our greatest object.”⁶⁰

Notes

1. Joel P. Brereton, “Sacred Space,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, 15 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 12:526.

2. The concept of America as a promised land, blessed and watched over by God, quickly took root in the newly founded nation. During the first half of the nineteenth century most Americans felt a strong sense of mission or “chosenness.” There was a common belief that their nation had been selected by God—“set apart” for a special and divine mission. That belief certainly existed at least as early as the mid-eighteenth century. As Jonathan Edwards announced in 1742, “The latter-day glory, is probably to begin in America.” See *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1, part 2, section 2. By the end of the Revolutionary war, America was being hailed as the sanctuary of Christianity, and the “leader in an attack on the Antichrist,” which naturally was assumed (on the tail of the war) to be England. See Craig S. Campbell, *Images of the New Jerusalem: Latter Day Saint Faction Interpretations of Independence, Missouri* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2004), 4. One eighteenth century source echoed this view of America’s chosen status and divine calling: “Pure religion will revive and flourish among us in a greater degree than ever it has done before. . . . This country will become the seat of civil and religious liberty; the place from which Christian light and knowledge shall be dispersed to the rest of the world; so that our Zion shall become the delight and praise of the whole earth, and foreign nations shall suck of the breasts of her consolations, and be satisfied with the abundant light and knowledge of Gospel truth which they shall derive from her.” Samuel West, cited in James W. Davidson, *The Logic of Millennial Thought: Eighteenth-Century New England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 250, cited in Campbell, *Images of the New Jerusalem*, 4. While most American Puritans spoke of the “New Jerusalem” in terms of a symbolic “heavenly condition” rather than an actual place, nevertheless, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, numerous communities were created around religious ideals; towns and villages were plotted with the religious

meetinghouse at the center, with emphasis on the covenant, “a two-way pact with God, kept by observing the proper Puritan life.” In return, they believed, “God was ‘under obligation to supply grace’ to those who kept the contract.” See Campbell, *Images of the New Jerusalem*, 6.

3. Campbell, *Images of the New Jerusalem*, 2.

4. In some cases in the early history of the United States millennial accounts appeared that were supposedly written by Native Americans themselves. One such document was titled *Apocalypse of Chiokoyhikoy, Chief of the Iroquois*. In it, a vision describes a people who would rise up on American soil, be an agent for blessed revolution, after which the “supreme god” would return, bringing “good times” to the land and people of the Americas. See Earnest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Ideal of America’s Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 3, 113–16. See also Robert Griffin and Donald A. Grinde Jr., *Apocalypse of Chiokoyhikoy, Chief of the Iroquois* (Québec City, Canada: University of Laval Press, 1997).

5. Joseph Smith believed that the Garden of Eden was located in Jackson County, Missouri. See Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journals, 1833–1898*, typescript, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983–1984), 7:129.

6. Joseph Smith planned a complex of twenty-four temples at the heart of the Independence, Missouri, Zion community. See B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Century One*, 6 vols. (Provo, UT: Corporation of the President, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1965), 1:311. It is evident, however, that the twenty-four “temples” were originally intended to be used primarily for administrative and educational purposes.

7. Joseph Smith, as cited in Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journals*, 2:240. On May 4, 1842, the Prophet administered the temple endowment for the first time to several of his closest associates. See Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev. 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 5:1–2 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*).

8. *History of the Church*, 3:390. In parallel with the Saints’ efforts to establish Zion in North America, Joseph Smith anticipated the day when the Jews would be established once again in the region of Palestine. See D&C 109:62–63. Thus Latter-day Saints anticipate the establishment of two Zions. “Latter-day scripture declares that Jerusalem will become the spiritual-temporal capital of the whole Eastern Hemisphere, ‘One Great Centre, and one mighty Sovereign,’ . . . while [the other] Zion will be the place of refuge and divine direction in the Western Hemisphere.” In 1841, LDS Apostle Orson Hyde dedicated the land of Jerusalem under the direction of Joseph Smith. “His prayer petitioned for the gathering home of the exiles, the fruitfulness of the earth, the establishing of an independent government, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and ‘rearing a Temple in honor of thy name.’” Truman G. Madsen, “Zionism,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols., ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 4:1626. The nineteenth century saw the fusing of traditional messianism with modern nationalism and created a true Zionist movement among Jews. This led to the conception and eventual establishment of a Jewish homeland.

9. See Robert L. Millet, “Zion,” in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, ed. Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 1397.

10. It was later revealed to Joseph that the Saints should “establish a like community of faith in the last days,” and that this community should be built “upon the same foundational principles of consecration and stewardship” that Enoch’s city of Zion adhered to. Millet, “Zion,” 1397.

11. Joseph Smith, “To the elders of the church of Latter Day Saints” *Latter Day Saints’*

Messenger and Advocate 1, no. 12 (September 1835): 179; also in *History of the Church*, 2:254.

12. Joseph Smith to W. W. Phelps, January 14, 1833, in *History of the Church*, 1:316. Revelations received by the Joseph Smith during the time of the Jackson County disturbances indicate that the Saints themselves were at least partially responsible for the persecution. See D&C 101:1–2; 105:9.

13. Oliver Olney, Journal, May 7, 1842, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, copy in the possession of the author.

14. Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, December 16, 1855, 4:370.

15. John Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–1886), 5:371, October 25, 1857.

16. Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses*, 13:138, April 10, 1870.

17. Some discussion of a return would resurface in the latter half of the twentieth century. However, those who had known Joseph Smith and had sought the establishment of a Missouri Zion during his day rarely spoke of it from the pulpit after Brigham Young's death.

18. First Presidency statement as cited in Richard L. Jenson, "The British Gathering to Zion," in *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles 1837–1987*, ed. V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss, Larry C. Porter (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1987), 189.

19. George Q. Cannon, Remarks, *Sixty-Ninth Semi-Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1898), 4.

20. Joseph F. Smith, Remarks, *Seventy-Fourth Semi-Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1903), 4.

21. In 1913 the Cardston Alberta Temple was the LDS Church's only non-Utah temple. The Church had previously build temples in Kirtland, Ohio; and Nauvoo, Illinois. However, in 1913 the Nauvoo Temple was non-existent, and the RLDS church had possession of the Kirtland Temple, which structure did not allow for the performance of salvific ordinances the Latter-day Saints were then practicing.

22. Gregory A. Prince and William Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 262. In a 1952 joint meeting of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve it was noted that the reason for "carrying temples to the people in Europe" was so that "they will build up strong branches" of the Church there. *Ibid.*, 262–63.

23. This is an amalgamation of Spencer W. Kimball's teachings on this matter, in Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, comp. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998), 439–40, emphasis added.

24. Bruce R. McConkie, remarks given at the Mexico and Central America Area General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Mexico City, Mexico, August 25–27, 1972, as cited in Richard O. Cowan, "The Great Temple of the New Jerusalem," in *Regional Studies in Church History: Missouri*, ed. Arnold K. Garr and Clark V. Johnson (Provo, UT: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1994), 151.

25. See Gordon B. Hinckley, "This Glorious Easter Morn," *Ensign* 26, no. 5 (May 1996): 65. The Conference Center was dedicated in October 8, 2000.

26. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LDS_Conference_Center. See also Don L. Searle, "The Conference Center: 'This New and Wonderful Hall,'" *Ensign* 30, no. 10 (October 2000): 33. While the LDS Church has never published the total cost to build the Conference Center, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported its price tag at \$240 million. See "Questionable Spending" *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 22, 2000, A–10.

27. See <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/downtown-redevelopment-plans-announced>.

28. Gordon B. Hinckley, "We Bear Testimony to the World," *Ensign* 36, no. 11 (November 2006): 4–5.

29. Carole Mikita, "A look inside as City Creek Center's Completion Nears," March 1, 2012, posted on the KSL website, <http://www.ksl.com/?nid=148&sid=19428181>.

30. Thomas S. Monson, "Welcome to Conference," *Ensign* 42, no. 11 (November 2012): 6.

31. The Kansas City Missouri Temple serves some twelve stakes, consisting of 102 wards and twenty-five branches of the Church. Approximately 25,000 members of the LDS Church live in the temple's district.

32. Parenthetically, the Kansas City Missouri LDS Temple is in Clay County, not Jackson County, Missouri. Thus it could not qualify as fulfilling Joseph Smith's initial concept of a temple in Jackson County, let alone Independence.

33. For example, see Jan Shippy, "The Scattering of the Gathered and the Gathering of the Scattered: The Mormon Diaspora in the Mid-Twentieth Century," in *Juanita Brooks Lecture Series—Issue 3* (St. George, UT: Dixie College, 1991), 4–5.

34. Wilford Woodruff, Remarks, *Sixty-eighth Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1898), 57, emphasis added.

35. Smith, "To the elders of the church of Latter Day Saints" 179, emphasis added; also in *History of the Church*, 2:254.

36. *History of the Church*, 3:391, emphasis added.

37. See also D&C 87:8. BYU professors Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig J. Ostler have written: "The safety known to the General body of the church will center in its stakes. That these stakes will dot the whole earth suggests that the safety of the Saints will center not in a particular location but rather through the garment of protection that rests upon them in and through keeping their covenants with exactness and honor. As the stakes of Zion spread across the face of the earth, we expect temples to follow. The hope is that in some not too far distant day every faithful Latter-day Saint will find themselves within some reasonable proximity of a temple. 'Let us . . . recite the crowning reason for gathering to Zion or to her stakes,' taught Elder Bruce R. McConkie. 'It is to receive the blessings found in the temples of the Lord.'" Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig J. Ostler, *Revelations of the Restoration: A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants and Other Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 918. Additionally, BYU professors Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett have concluded: "Note that it is Zion, wherever she is established in all her stakes, and not exclusively in Far West [where this revelation was received] or even in Missouri, that the Saints will find refuge at the last day." Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett, *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000–2005), 4:111. As previously noted, protection is *not* about geography; it is about faithfulness to covenants. And where the Temple is, there is Zion. Hence D&C 124:36 informs us: "For it is ordained that in Zion, and in her stakes, and in Jerusalem, those places which I have appointed for refuge, shall be the places for your baptisms for your dead." In my view, the passage in D&C 45:64–71 is quite clear that the New Jerusalem "Zion" in Missouri will be a place of refuge from a wicked and fallen world. However, it does not say that Missouri is the only portion of Zion that has this protective power. At the same time it may also be referring to multiple locations of Zion at the time the Lord returns and the protective power of the House of the Lord upon those who worship therein. D&C 115:6 indicates that this protective power was not only reserved for those who gathered to Missouri, but promises that *any* who gathered to Zion, or "her

stakes,” would find “refuge from the storms” that were to come.

38. Ezra Taft Benson, “Prepare Yourselves for the Great Day of the Lord,” *Brigham Young University Fireside and Devotional Speeches* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1981), 68.

39. *History of the Church*, 5:85.

40. Woodruff, Remarks, 57, emphasis added.

41. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 11:16, December 11, 1864.

42. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 2:253, June 5, 1853, emphasis added.

43. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 9:138, July 28, 1861, emphasis added.

44. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 439. Elder Erastus Snow taught: “The work before us is a great one, and very much remaineth to be accomplished according to the prophecies—Israel is to be gathered, Jerusalem rebuilt, Zion established, the vineyard of the Lord pruned and the corrupt branches cut off and cast into the fire, while the good branches shall be grafted in and partake of the root and fatness of the tame olive tree. There is a great work to be accomplished in the earth. . . . As our minds grew, and our ideas enlarged, we began to perceive that we were only children in our views and feelings, our ideas and expectations. We have the views, ideas and expectations of children; and we see how the Lord has enlarged Israel and expanded His work . . . the time was that we looked for one temple. The early revelations given to the Latter-day Saints predicted a temple in Zion, and Zion in our minds at that time was a little place on the Missouri River in Jackson County, Western Missouri—a town and a few surrounding villages, or a country, peradventure it may be as large as a county. When we first heard the fullness of the Gospel preached by the first Elders, and read the revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith, our ideas of Zion were very limited. But as our minds began to grow and expand, why we began to look upon Zion as a great people, and the Stakes of Zion as numerous, and the area of the country to be inhabited by the people of Zion as this great American continent, or at least such portions of it as the Lord should consecrate for the gathering of His people. We ceased to set bounds to Zion and her Stakes. We began also to cease to think about a single temple in one certain place. Seeing the different Stakes of Zion that were being organized we perceived the idea, possibly, of as many temples. Having had one spot pointed out in the revelations for the temple in Jackson County, our minds expanded so that in a short time we were building another temple in a Stake of Zion in Kirtland, Ohio. A little while afterwards we were laying the foundation of a temple in Far West, Missouri, and driven before our enemies; from that place we next laid the foundation and built up a temple unto the Lord in Nauvoo. When we located in the mountains and laid the foundation of a temple in Salt Lake City, who of us had an idea that before it should be completed we would be administering in a temple in St. George, and another in Logan, and another in Manti, and who conceives the idea to-day, that by the time these are completed and the Saints have officiated in them, we will be scattered over the American continent, building temples in a hundred other places? All this comes within the range of possibility, nay, probability, almost amounting to certainty. One of my brethren behind me here, who understands these things, and who can speak knowingly in regard to them, says, that we may put it down as a certainty, that by and by, there will be hundreds of these temples throughout the land. Our minds are beginning to comprehend the object and purpose of the temples of our God.” Erastus Snow, *Journal of Discourses*, 25:30–31, February 2, 1884.

45. Monte S. Nyman, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Granite Publishing, 2008–2009), 1:474.

46. Joseph Smith, “To the elders of the church of Latter Day Saints” 179, emphasis added; also *History of the Church*, 2:254.

47. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 9:139, July 28, 1861.

48. Robinson and Garrett, *Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, 2:143.

49. President Joseph F. Smith prophesied: “May Israel flourish upon the hills and rejoice upon the mountains, and assemble together unto the place which God has appointed, and there prosper, multiply and replenish the earth, and thence spread abroad throughout the land; for the time will come when we will find it necessary to fulfil the purposes of the Almighty by occupying the land of Zion in all parts of it. We are not destined to be confined to the valleys of the mountains. Zion is destined to grow, and the time will come when we will cry aloud, more than we do today, ‘Give us room that we may dwell!’” Joseph F. Smith, *Seventy-Seventh Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1907), 118.

50. Nyman, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, 1:281. George A. Horton Jr. has written: “During the impending wars, as the wicked slay the wicked, the situation will be so severe that ‘the saints also shall hardly escape’ (D&C 63:34). They are admonished to ‘gather together, and stand in holy places,’ e.g., stakes of Zion (D&C 101:22).” George A. Horton Jr., “Knowing the Calamity,” in *Studies in Scripture, Volume 1: The Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson (Sandy, UT: Randall Book, 1989), 46.

51. Bruce R. McConkie, “The Keys of the Kingdom,” *Ensign* 12, no. 5 (May 1982): 22. Milton V. Backman Jr., and Robert L. Millet have written: “Only through the establishment and strengthening of stakes throughout the world could the full concept of Zion be realized; only then could the Lord make it possible for the blessings of the temple to be had universally. Joseph Smith taught: ‘The main object [of gathering] was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His Kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation.’” Milton V. Backman Jr., and Robert L. Millet, “Heavenly Manifestations in the Kirtland Temple,” in *Studies in Scripture, Volume One: The Doctrine and Covenants*, 425. Additionally, McConkie has stated: “Now I call your attention to the facts, set forth in these scriptures, that the gathering of Israel consists of joining the true church; of coming to a knowledge of the true God and of his saving truths; and of worshipping him in the congregations of the Saints in all nations and among all peoples. Please note that these revealed words speak of the folds of the Lord; of Israel being gathered to the lands of their inheritance; of Israel being established in all their lands of promise; and of there being congregations of the covenant people of the Lord in every nation, speaking every tongue, and among every people when the Lord comes again.” Bruce R. McConkie, quoted by President Harold B. Lee, “Strengthen the Stakes of Zion,” *Ensign* 3, no. 7 (July 1973): 4. Similarly, 2 Nephi 9:1–2 prophesies: “And now, my beloved brethren, I have read these things that ye might know concerning the covenants of the Lord that he has covenanted with all the house of Israel—That he has spoken unto the Jews, by the mouth of his holy prophets, even from the beginning down, from generation to generation, until the time comes that they shall be restored to the true church and fold of God; when they shall be gathered home to the lands of their inheritance, and shall be established in all their lands of promise.”

52. Mario S. De Pillis noted: “Western Missouri was holy millennial ground to the early Mormons—and remains fraught with millennial expectations for Mormons today.” Mario S. De Pillis, “Christ Comes to Jackson County: The Mormon City of Zion and Its Consequences,” in *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 23 (2003): 26.

53. Significantly, Scott C. Esplin conjectures that following the receipt of D&C 58 in August 1831, the concept of Zion “shifted from Zion as a place to Zion as a process” by which “the Saints could become his promised people.” See Scott C. Esplin, “‘Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise’: Building Zion by Becoming Zion,” in *You Shall Have my Word: Exploring the Text of the Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Scott C. Esplin, Richard O. Cowan,

and Rachel Cope (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2012), 136.

54. Orson F. Whitney, *The Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 4th ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973), 65.

55. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Israel, Israel, God is Calling," *CES Fireside for Young Adults*, September 9, 2012.

56. D. Todd Christofferson, "Come to Zion," *Ensign* 38, no. 11 (November 2008): 38.

57. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 9:283, February 23, 1862.

58. The current *LDS Bible Dictionary* gives the following definition of Zion: "The word *Zion* is used repeatedly in all the standard works of the Church, and is defined in latter-day revelation as 'the pure in heart' (D&C 97:21). Other usages of Zion have to do with a geographical location. For example, Enoch built a city that was called Zion (Moses 7:18–19); Solomon built his temple on Mount Zion (1 Kgs. 8:1; cf. 2 Sam. 5:6–7); and Jackson County, Missouri, is called Zion in many of the revelations in the D&C, such as 58:49–50; 62:4; 63:48; 72:13; 84:76; 104:47. The city of New Jerusalem, to be built in Jackson County, Missouri, is to be called Zion (D&C 45:66–67). The revelations also speak of 'the cause of Zion' (D&C 6:6; 11:6). In a wider sense all of North and South America are Zion (*HC* 6:318–19). For further references see 1 Chr. 11:5; Ps. 2:6; 99:2; 102:16; Isa. 1:27; 2:3; 4:3–5; 33:20; 52:1–8; 59:20; Jer. 3:14; 31:6; Joel 2:1–32; Amos 6:1; Obad. 1:17, 21; Heb. 12:22–24; Rev. 14:1–5; and many others. (In the N.T., *Zion* is spelled *Sion*.)" *LDS Bible Dictionary* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), 792–93.

59. See for example, Graham W. Doxey, "Missouri Myths," *Ensign* 9, no. 4 (April 1979): 64–65.

60. *History of the Church*, 3:388.

