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A HISTORY OF THE CONCEPTS OF ZION AND NEW JERUSALEM IN AMERICA
FROM EARLY COLONIALISM TO 1835 WITH A COMPARISON TO
THE TEACHINGS OF THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH

by

Ryan S. Gardner

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Religious Education

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Ryan S. Gardner

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

Sept. 20, 2002
Date

Bruce A. Van Orden
Bruce Van Orden, Chair

Sept 20, 2002
Date

Grant Underwood
Grant Underwood

Sept 20, 2002
Date

Lawrence R. Flake
Lawrence Flake

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Ryan S. Gardner in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

Sept. 20, 2002
Date

Bruce A. Van Orden
Bruce Van Orden
Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Department

D. Kelly Ogden
D. Kelly Ogden
Graduate Coordinator

Accepted for the College

Andrew C. Skinner
Andrew C. Skinner
Dean, College of Religious Education

ABSTRACT

A HISTORY OF THE CONCEPTS OF ZION AND NEW JERUSALEM IN AMERICA FROM EARLY COLONIALISM TO 1835 WITH A COMPARISON TO THE TEACHINGS OF THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH

Ryan S. Gardner

Religious Education

Master of Arts in Religious Education

This thesis discusses the role that the idea of Zion has played in the first three centuries of American religion. Millenarian themes, such as building New Jerusalem, were common religious themes in seventeenth- to nineteenth-century America. Understanding the doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints regarding this vital subject will be helpful for historians, scholars, and teachers.

When the Puritan colonists came to the New World in the early seventeenth century, they sought not only a land of religious liberty, but also a land of ultimate religious achievement: the establishment of Zion and/or New Jerusalem. Many of them hoped to demonstrate that an ideal theocratic society was possible and would solve the world's governmental dilemmas. They paved the way for a long-standing Zion tradition in America.

During the eighteenth century, the dream for Zion faded due to the growing concern for individual salvation. The banner of revolution and independence also superseded the interest in the “ensign for the nations” (see Isaiah 11:10-12). Unfortunately, during this era Zion and New Jerusalem became the watchwords for dissident charismatic truth-seekers with small congregations.

Antebellum America presented a completely new environment. As America forged westward, more and more settlers became dissatisfied with mainstream organized religions. Primitivism and restorationism made Zion and New Jerusalem an inevitable desire for many religious enthusiasts, though opinions varied on when, where, how, and by whom the “city of God” (Psalm 46:4; see also Psalm 48) could be established.

Within this historical context rose The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, whose members were intent on building the New Jerusalem on the American continent and establishing Zion throughout the earth (see Articles of Faith 1:10).¹ It is my ardent hope that this attempt to put the Latter-day Saint concept of Zion and New Jerusalem in its early American millenarian context will be a useful resource in helping to “put all inquirers after truth in possession of the facts” (JS-H 1:1).

¹ See also Joseph Smith, *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, comp. and ed. by Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 415-416, 418; and Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols., introduction and notes by B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-1951), 1:315.

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Chapter One—Biblical Foundations of Zion

Although the name Zion is one of the most ancient names in the Old Testament, it does not occur in the text until 2 Samuel 5.¹ It appears one hundred fifty times throughout the Old Testament—about once every eight pages in a standard King James Version of the Bible. The term Zion appears only seven times in the New Testament, and five of those are from quotations or paraphrases of passages from the Old Testament—three from Isaiah and two from Zechariah. It is first mentioned as a place, but it also signifies a people or a society that exceeds geographical boundaries.

This chapter will examine the biblical concept of Zion. Closely associated with the theocratic society of Zion is its capital city, the New Jerusalem. “The New Jerusalem refers to the capital of the new creation in which the presence of God is with humankind . . . The OT image of the people of God as his bride is often associated with the renewal of Zion, the renewed Jerusalem.”²

References to New Jerusalem must be included in this study of Zion for two important reasons. First, New Jerusalem is the archetypal biblical city in the New Testament and Christian theology denoting the ideal, redeemed, godly society. A study of the biblical concept of the “state of Zion” would be inherently flawed without including any references to its capital city.

Second, this thesis investigates how early American ideas about Zion and New Jerusalem relate to the same concepts in “Mormonism.” In the early history of the Church of

¹ Regarding Zion as an ancient name, see David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6 vols., 6:1096. Hereafter cited as ABD. All references from the Bible are from the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Version, unless stated otherwise.

² ABD, 4:1095.

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the doctrines concerning the establishment of Zion and the eventual building of New Jerusalem are more than just incidental theological superfluities. They are essential to much of the revelation received by the Prophet Joseph Smith as well as the driving motivation behind the Saints' several migrations from the 1830s through the 1870s.³ Therefore, it is critical in a study of biblically oriented people like the early Latter-day Saints to explore the Bible for answers to questions such as: What is Zion? Where is Zion? And who is Zion?⁴

However, the task is more complicated than simply answering these questions. This research will seek to understand how biblical concepts helped shape the early American religious consciousness about Zion. This paper will explore and try to recover the seventeenth-century Puritan understanding of the terms *Zion* and *New Jerusalem*. The Puritan interpretation of Zion is the foundation for the history of the idea of Zion in America. American religious studies cannot escape these foundations.

Such a study of the biblical concept of Zion/New Jerusalem must necessarily begin with at least general considerations regarding apostolic and patristic (meaning the period of the Christian church led primarily by the church fathers) biblical exegesis. Exegesis is the manner in which people read, study, and interpret a text. This paper must also briefly discuss interpretive methodology and statements of biblical commentators from the Middle Ages

³ For a more thorough treatment of the impact of the doctrine of the gathering and the establishment of Zion on these events that lie beyond the scope of this thesis, the reader may examine the following works: James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed., (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992), especially chapters 1-8; and Richard E. Bennett, *We'll Find the Place: The Mormon Exodus, 1846-1848*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1997), especially chapter 12.

⁴ In answer to critics who claim that members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are not Bible-believing Christians, consult Lenet Hadley Read's *How We Got the Bible*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985), Philip L. Barlow's *Mormons and the Bible*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), and Stephen E. Robinson's *Are Mormons Christian?*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1991).

through the Reformation and into the Renaissance.⁵ In this first chapter, a skeletal framework will be constructed for understanding how the biblical concepts of Zion and New Jerusalem influenced the foundational religious attitudes, feelings, and objectives of colonial Americans.

Apostolic Exegesis of the Old Testament

Jesus and his Apostles had their own mode of scriptural exegesis. They appealed regularly to the Old Testament to demonstrate the messiahship of Jesus. Thus, Jesus and his Apostles validated the Hebrew scriptures and opened them up for centuries of exploration and interpretation within the context of the Christian faith. This mode of apostolic exegesis influenced how Puritans interpreted the Bible more than any other method.

In his book *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, Richard N. Longenecker asserts that the way Christians viewed and interpreted the Old Testament was based upon four basic presuppositions. The first was a concept he calls “corporate solidarity,” or in other words a form of collective salvation or damnation. God treated nations and groups of people in the history of Israel according to their aggregated righteousness or wickedness.⁶ Largely neglected for centuries, this idea reemerged in the faith and theology of the Puritans.

⁵ “The patristic period is usually recognized as extending from the close of the Apostolic period and ending with the death of the last of the Apostles, supposed to have occurred about 95 or 96 A.D.—to A.D. 750. The Patristic period of the Church is followed by what is called the Mediaeval period. ‘The line between these two Christian ages,’ says George A. Jackson in his Introduction to *The Apostolic Fathers*, ‘cannot be sharply drawn; but, speaking in a general way, the epoch of the Fathers was, in the Western Church, the first six centuries. In the Eastern Church, the patristic age may be extended to embrace John of Damascus (A. D. 750). The writers may be arranged, not unnaturally, in four groups. 1. (A. D. 95—180). The Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists, or writers contemporary with the formation of the New Testament canon. These all wrote in Greek. 2. (A. D. 180—325). The Fathers of the third century; or writers from Irenaeus to the Nicene Council; partly Greek, partly Latin. 3. (A. D. 325—590). The Post-Nicene Latin Fathers. 4. (A. D. 325-750). The Post-Nicene Greek Fathers.’ (Apostolic Fathers, Jackson, p. 11).” (B. H. Roberts, *Seventy's Course in Theology* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1907-1912], 3: 118 - 119.)

⁶ Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 95.

Second was the assumption Longenecker calls “correspondence in history,” which reflects the belief that “history is neither endlessly cyclical nor progressively developing due to forces inherent in it . . . it is expressive of the divine intent and explicating the divine will. With such an understanding of history, early Christians were prepared to trace correspondences between God’s activity of the past and his action in the present.”⁷ Like the apostolic Christians, the Puritans read the scriptures as a historical-religious typology in which they saw much of their own world reflected. They saw themselves as a modern Israel who fled captivity, miraculously crossed the sea, conquered in a promised land, and followed prophets (although they called them “divines”) whom they believed were inspired of God to do his work and lead his people.

Longenecker’s third assumption is called “eschatological fulfillment”—the belief in the end times. Christians in the apostolic age believed in an imminent Second Advent, the Millennium, and an eventual resurrection and judgment when all the public and private affairs of mankind would be settled according to the truth, mercy, and justice of God.

Finally, apostolic exegetes saw the “messianic presence” in the word of God as the key to interpreting and understanding scripture. “For the earliest believers,” wrote Longenecker, “this meant 1) that the living presence of Christ, through his Spirit, was to be considered a determining factor in all their biblical exegesis, and 2) that the Old Testament was to be interpreted Christocentrically.”⁸ To try to understand or interpret the scriptures independent of Him was inherently flawed in their view. The Puritans also assumed what F.F. Bruce called this “Christological” interpretation of scriptures.⁹

⁷ Longenecker, 94-95.

⁸ Longenecker, 95.

⁹ Longenecker, 95.

The Puritans adhered more closely to the assumptions of biblical interpretation held by those in the apostolic age than those of any other era of biblical exegesis. In their reading of the Bible, they maintained that God would save groups as well as individuals who relied upon his grace and followed his word. They saw biblical typology in their own circumstances, identifying with and seeing themselves as an extension of God's chosen people. Puritans also believed that Christ had ushered in the messianic age, that they were living in the "last days," and that all things in the Bible pointed to salvation in Christ alone.

However, no group can completely escape its own history and culture. As much as the Puritans would have liked to return to live in the apostolic golden age, they were separated from their closest exegetical kin by 1,400 years of biblical interpretive history—and that history inevitably affected them.

Patristic Biblical Exegesis

During the centuries after the death of the Apostles, the church fathers, or patriarchs, emerged as the primary biblical exegetes for Christian thought. To the canonized Old Testament (the Hebrew scriptures) they added the Gospels, the epistles of Paul and of a few other early Church leaders from the apostolic period, and the complex apocalyptic vision of John. These early church fathers approached the new body of Christian scripture with a passion for applying reason and logic in interpreting and understanding God's word, much the same way that Jewish scribes approached the Hebrew scriptures. Several aspects of this approach help explain why Puritans approached the Bible the way they did centuries later.

During this period when Greeks and other non-Jewish "Gentiles" assumed the leadership of the church, Christian theologians focused more on the nature of Christ—not just who he was and what he meant for the human race, but his physical or non-physical

relationship to the other members of the Godhead. The great debates on this subject, and numerous other Christian doctrines, resulted in councils like Nicea and creeds like that of Athanasius. Debate and study may not have replaced faith and revelation, but they certainly overshadowed it. The Puritans also applied reason and logic to their interpretation of scripture, especially in regard to justifying their “holy enterprise” in the New World, but they seemed less concerned about what percentage of Christ was divine or human and whether or not he was of the same or a different substance from the Father.

The church fathers used more allegory than typology in Christian biblical exegesis. “The relationship of the old and new [was] transformed into the relationship of earthly to heavenly; and the Hebrew Scriptures [became] a mysterious allegory of Christian truths.”¹⁰ However, they still clung to the “Christological” interpretation of scripture. As James Kugel and Rowan Greer pointed out, “When we conclude that for the early church the Rule of faith supplied the basic . . . framework for interpreting Scripture, we are really saying that for the church fathers the true meaning of Scripture was a theological one.”¹¹ By allegory, students of both Testaments during this period of biblical study learned to understand their quest for salvation, which sometimes seemed mysteriously lost in a text containing ancient Hebraic tribal law and the history of the Hebrew people.

The church fathers were not primarily concerned with whether or not the scriptures were historically valid—they believed they were. Rather, they were interested in what the scriptures taught allegorically about the divinity of Christ, his message of salvation, his heavenly kingdom (and at times his kingdom on earth), the nature of the Godhead, and the

¹⁰ James L. Kugel and Rowan A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), 127.

¹¹ Kugel and Greer, 177.

path of discipleship to salvation. This diverse range of complex theology to practical application of gospel principles can be briefly illustrated by considering the range of the writings of the Church fathers from the more theological *Confessions* and *Tractates* of St. Augustine to the great homiletic works of John Chrysostom and John of Damascus.¹² The Puritans read the scriptures to learn about the mind and person of God, but they were much more focused on learning how to be better Christians in their everyday lives.

It is important to clearly understand the allegorical exegesis of the Christian patriarchs, because our study seeks to understand how the Puritans reacted to the history of biblical exegesis. Kugel and Greer explained, “what gives form to the exegetical work [of the church fathers] is the Christian story . . . all is a story that gives some order to the scriptural texts that are used. It is in this sense that Christ is regarded as the key to the meaning of Scripture.”¹³ By the time of the church fathers, several centuries had shown that Christ’s Second Advent upon the earth was not going to be as immediate as some of the apostolic Christians may have once believed. Therefore, many scriptural texts that earlier Christians—and the Puritans also—would have interpreted and understood as showing a prophetic “correspondence in history” were being understood by the church fathers and those they taught as a pattern for how everyday Christians were to achieve salvation in a sinful world.

This is not to say that typology died away completely. Typological and allegorical interpretations were lines that were frequently crossed by the patriarchal successors of the apostles. “The confusion between typology (understood as relating old to new) and allegorism (understood as relating earthly to heavenly) should not surprise us,” wrote Kugel

¹² An easily accessible and searchable collection of the works of the Church Fathers is available from *Early Church Fathers*, [database online] available from <http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/>, Internet.

¹³ Kugel and Greer, 133.

and Greer, “[for] the juxtaposition of a cosmological perspective with a salvation history one creates the perplexity.”¹⁴ Puritans employed the allegorical approach to some degree to see *their* place in a sinful world. They used the typological approach, which flourished in the apostolic era and began to fade in the patristic period, to define *their* purpose in what they believed was the grand unfolding of God’s great design.¹⁵

From the idea of a covenant society in early New England plantations to the “Redeemer Nation” concept of American revolutionaries, biblical typology is the backdrop for nearly all political and social development in the budding United States. This may seem hard to accept for some who have grown up with secularized American history. But “for the first two centuries after English settlement,” observed Barlow, “the Bible played a role in shaping American culture for which there was no European equivalent.”¹⁶ However, the Bible passed through many centuries before it came to the Puritans. We will now briefly consider some major facets of Bible study in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance before we conclude how the Puritans would have seen Zion in the pages of “the Holy Book.”

Biblical Study in the Middle Ages

Beryl Smalley discussed three essential aspects of biblical study and criticism during this period that are of particular interest in this study: 1) the Bible as a course of study; 2) investigation of Bible physics, and 3) scriptural inquiry as to the proper role of government. A brief discussion of each of these points will show how accessible the Bible and its voluminous commentative history was for seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Bible adherents. We will also identify a road of textual criticism that the Puritans almost certainly

¹⁴ Kugel and Greer, 140-141.

¹⁵ See Thomas S. Davis, “The Traditions of Puritan Typology,” in Sacvan Bercovitch, ed., *Typology and Early American Literature*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1972), 12.

¹⁶ Barlow, 8.

were not interested in. Finally, biblical exegesis in the Middle Ages laid the foundation for the all-consuming interest of the New World settlers, who embarked on a unique opportunity in a virgin world with the intention to bring about the rebirth of godly human government.

First of all, during the Middle Ages, the study of the Bible became increasingly intellectual and academic. This happened at least in part because the invention of the printing press created myriad shelves of Bibles, commentaries, and other contemporary extra-biblical materials for a literature-starved world. A kind of “information age” had begun and it had a ready population. However, modern readers may be surprised to learn how sophisticated this early dissemination of information was, even before the coming of Gutenberg and subsequent printing innovations. Smalley explained, “The whole library technique, in fact, had approached the modern [standard] with surprising suddenness.”¹⁷

Many of the early Puritan leaders were trained in this environment, so they certainly had access to commentary on the ideas regarding Zion and the holy city of New Jerusalem. Thus, it is not unreasonable to conclude that what St. Jerome may have said or thought about Zion and “the holy city” was at least available to the Puritans and may have shaped their own ideas about the subject, whether or not they referred to it directly.

While biblical studies benefited from the increase of available materials and accessibility to the writings and commentaries of nearly a millennium and a half, some early branches of textual biblical exegesis arose that would have frustrated the more dogmatically-oriented Puritans. According to Smalley, science and the scientific method inclined some Bible scholars during the Middle Ages to make inquiries of the Bible text “which may strike us as gross or at best naïve: how did Jonas resist the *virtus digestiva* of the fish in its belly?

¹⁷ Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, (Oxford: Alden Press, 1952), 366.

Did the Hebrew children's morale enable them to flourish during their fast? Such questions bespeak a driving desire to understand exactly how things happened."¹⁸ Puritans viewed the Bible pragmatically and would have been more concerned with the perceived spiritual advantages of fasting than with the chemical reactions of a group of hungry Israelites. They had much larger issues that occupied their religious thinking.

One issue that surfaces in the centuries just prior to the Puritan movement is the relationship between church and state. Speaking of fifteenth- to sixteenth-century Christians, Smalley writes, "the problems of secular government are claiming more of their attention. The State is looming up before them as something important in itself, quite apart from its hostility or friendliness to the clergy . . . [by the end of the thirteenth century] we find digressions about *the best sort of earthly government* and the ruler's duty to augment the value of his kingdom in real property and movables."¹⁹ Debate about "the best sort of earthly government" continued from the Middle Ages to the days of the Puritans and continues today. As will be shown in succeeding pages, the Puritans scoured the pages of the Bible and believed they found the answer in Zion.

Interpreting the Bible in the Reformation and the Renaissance

As we draw nearer to the birth of the Puritan movement, a couple of comments must be made about biblical exegesis from the latter part of the fifteenth century to the latter part of the sixteenth century. One of the primary and earliest Renaissance biblical commentaries was Valla's *Collatio Novi Testamenti*, written between 1442 and 1457, but not published until 1505. "Valla," trained as a Greek scholar, "treats the New Testament as a *text*—a series of words governed by formal lexical and syntactic rules—not as a *document* supplying

¹⁸ Smalley, 370-371.

¹⁹ Smalley, 372-373, emphasis added, (material in brackets not in original).

information about the world.”²⁰ Thus, the trend toward higher textual criticism in the more academic fields of biblical studies began and continues to the present day.²¹

Debra Kuller Shuger pointed out that “law is the characteristic discipline of the Renaissance, in much the same way that logic is the characteristic discipline of the Middle Ages: it leaves its mark on other fields of inquiry,” including biblical scholarship and interpretation.²² She also wrote:

The rise of cultural analysis resulted from the fusion of this legal historiography with the wealth of information pouring in from newly rediscovered Jewish texts: Josephus, Philo, the Targums . . . the Midrash . . . the Mishnah . . . the Talmud. Access to these texts marks the critical rupture between Renaissance biblical scholarship and patristic exegesis. After the mid-sixteenth century the Church Fathers, still principal authorities for Erasmus, were gradually replaced by Hebraic texts as sources for the philological and cultural interpretations of the New Testament.²³

While the Puritans were not completely exempt from the influence of this mainstream flow of biblical study and scholarship, they generally resisted this movement. In their efforts to recapture the spirit and purity of the early Christian Church, they maintained their loyalties to the Bible as the literal word of God rather than just an ordinary text.

The exegetical methods acceptable to the Puritans and other early European colonists to this continent point to three general statements about the colonial and early American interpretation of the Bible. First, New England colonists were far more likely to see the ideas and prophecies in the Bible as having real, literal fulfillment in the world—they were literalists more than allegorists. Second, primitivism—the desire to recover original Christian worship and practices—prevailed and permeated every aspect of early American

²⁰ Debora Kuller Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 18, emphasis in original.

²¹ For where this trend has taken branches of biblical exegesis, see John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A beginner's handbook*, rev. ed., (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973).

²² Shuger, 52.

²³ Shuger, 32-33.

religion. While the Reformation had an immeasurable impact on the salvation theology of American spirituality, the Puritan tendency in biblical exegesis was toward the literal apostolic period and the logical patristic period. Third, seventeenth- to nineteenth-century inhabitants of colonial America were far more interested in practical application of the Bible than in the massive and complex theological debates of their mother lands. It was well over 150 years after the Massachusetts Bay Colony was established before an American commentary of the Bible was even published. Colonists were more interested in making the ideals of the Bible a reality than in philosophizing about them.

Having seen *how* the Puritans would have interpreted the Bible, we turn to a discussion of the sacred text that defined colonial and American consciousness more than any other collective body of writing. The Bible is certainly a text, but for the Puritans it was *the* text—it was the word of God.

The Geneva Study Bible and the New World

In addition to saying “the Puritan experiment depended on the Bible,” Harry S. Stout also warned, “To the extent that students of English and American Puritanism ignore this most basic of all texts in reconstructing the popular wellspring of the movement they overlook the basic life work of an entire people whose *sole* reading habit was the vernacular Bible.”²⁴ More than any other literary work or body of literature, the Bible influenced how the Puritans thought and viewed themselves and their world from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries.

A premier issue is the matter of which version of the Bible the Puritans and other colonial immigrants would have been using. Since the wording of the versions of the Bible

²⁴ Harry S. Stout, “Word and Order in Colonial New England,” in Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll, eds., *The Bible in America*, (Oxford University Press: New York, 1982), 19, 20, emphasis in original.

extant during the seventeenth century could vary significantly, this is no miniscule detail. In his article on “Puritan biblicism,” Stout noted,

Puritanism was actually the product of two Bible translations each of which dominated at different stages in the movement’s history, and each of which served different needs and purposes. In its infant stage, English Puritanism was organized around the Geneva translation of 1560. As the movement grew in power and influence, clerical loyalties switched to the Authorized or ‘King James’ version of 1611. This later version furnished the primary text on which New England’s Bible Commonwealth would rest.²⁵

Before jumping right to the KJV references to Zion, however, it will be helpful to analyze the influence that the Geneva Bible would have had on early Puritans.

The Geneva Bible was wildly popular in the late sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries. It was the best and most popular Bible available to English-speaking Christians of the time.²⁶ Anthony Gilby and William Whittingham, exiled from England under the religious persecution during Mary Tudor’s reign, proposed and published this translation of the Bible to satisfy the “necessary precondition for a biblically-based culture organized solely on God’s ordinances.”²⁷

The movement to put the word of God into the hands of the common man was not completely untempered by ecclesiastical authority and interpretation. Even Gilby and Whittingham, suffering themselves from religious oppression and ecclesiastical constraint, thought it dangerous to simply turn holy writ over to “private interpretation” (see 2 Pet. 1:20). Hence, they included over 300,000 words of commentary in the Geneva Bible to help

²⁵ Stout, 20.

²⁶ The Geneva Bible first appeared with doctrinal notes, maps, tables, and other study aids in 1560. It went through 140 editions, sixty of them after the printing of the KJV in 1611. The last edition of the Geneva Bible was 1644. See John R. Knott, Jr., *The Sword of the Spirit: Puritan Responses to the Bible*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 29.

²⁷ Stout, 20.

the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Christian exegete be sure they came up with the appropriate interpretation of scripture during their private study.²⁸

Speaking of the tremendous influence of this commentary, Stout wrote, “Aside from the Bible itself, the Genevan commentary was the only literary product all people shared in common . . . When we view the contents of these notes we are observing the symbolic universe of popular piety at its most direct and formative level.”²⁹ This part of the study focuses not only on *what* the Puritan colonizers read in the Bible, but also *how* they read it. And although they were using the KJV when they came to the New World, how they read it would inevitably have been affected by their study of the Geneva Bible at home and in seminaries just a few years earlier.

Before moving on to discover what the Bible says about Zion using the more normative KJV, there are three other aspects of the Geneva Bible that seem critical in forming the Puritan concept of Zion. First is the way that the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English Christians identified with the ancient nation of Israel. Although editions of the 1560 Geneva Bible are rather hard to come by, John Knott offers this description of some of the interesting artwork and illustrations present in this very popular Bible translation:

The [Puritan] habit of identifying with the experience of the Israelites, by an essentially ahistorical leap to the truth of the Word, pervades the Geneva Bible . . . most noticeably, in the woodcut printed on the original title page, which reveals the Israelites on the shore of the Red Sea with the pursuing Egyptians behind them and a pillar of fire on the other side. The same woodcut appears at the beginning of the fourteenth chapter of Exodus with a gloss explaining that the afflictions suffered by the church and its ministers in this world [contemporaneously] are sent as trials of faith and patience and that God is most ready to offer succor when the dangers are greatest.³⁰

²⁸ Stout, 21.

²⁹ Stout, 22.

³⁰ Knott, 29-30.

While there were some more literalist European Christians who believed they were blood descendants of Israel, the Puritans at least associated themselves spiritually with the children of Israel and believed that God would deliver and lead them as he had the ancient chosen people.³¹

The second aspect of the Geneva Bible that greatly influenced Puritan thinking was how they depended on the word of God as found in the Bible for direction in all aspects of life. “The Genevan theocracy had shown how a society might be governed by the Word,” explained Knott.

The emphasis of the 1560 edition on the need to consult the Word was eventually translated into a table, ‘How to take profit in reading of the holy Scripture,’ included in later editions for the benefit of the ordinary reader. This comprehensive guide tells one not only how to read the Bible but how often to read it (twice daily, at regular times) and breaks its contents down into broad categories of instruction: in matters of religion, *of government*, of family life, of private life, and of social behavior. It expresses in diagrammatic form . . . what came to be a typical Puritan emphasis on applying the Bible systematically to every aspect of daily life.³²

For New England colonists, “Scripture was seen as continuing to play a central role in the life of the godly society.”³³ The “Puritan experiment” rested upon the Bible as their permanent and underlying constitution. Their Zion, their New Jerusalem, would be the one they envisioned in the Bible, or they would not have it at all.

Lastly, “The single term which recurred most frequently in the marginal notes and best captures their central interpretive thrust,” Stout affirmed, “is *promise*. Phrases such as ‘the faithful keeping of his promises,’ or the ‘just performances of his promise,’ saturate the commentary.”³⁴ The idea that God had made certain promises to the faithful permeated the

³¹ For a more detailed discussion on this subject, see Stout, 23-27.

³² Knott, 32, emphasis added.

³³ Knott, 32.

³⁴ Stout, 23.

Puritan consciousness. Combining this idea with the eventual belief that they were God's chosen people led the Puritans to consider themselves as a literal modern Israel with a mission to accomplish in their promised land.

However, we must keep this concept in its proper perspective. While "covenant themes dominate the intellectual history of the period . . . [such themes] were not representative of the popular piety centered on the Geneva Bible and its notes."³⁵ Stout continued,

There was no extension of this individual and personal covenant of grace to a national ('federal') covenant between God and an entire people (including both saved and unsaved) which, as with Israel of old, would be premised on mutual obligations and temporal rewards and punishments. Indeed *the commentary* did not even refer to the nation of Israel, but instead to the 'people of God' or the 'heirs of the promise,' or the 'true seed of Abraham,' who always constituted a redeemed minority within the larger nation. Israel itself was a type of the invisible Church of Christ.³⁶

The Geneva Bible alone did not promote "corporate solidarity" nor affirm the Puritan concept of a social order based on religious covenant. Only the idea of the 'promise' of God extended to the faithful in the here-and-now permeated the popular Genevan commentary. But once implanted in Puritan thought, it only took an appropriate setting and religiously ambitious individuals to extend the idea of the promises from solely individual application to a whole covenant society.

The King James Version of the Bible and the New World

Having discussed the influence that the Geneva Bible may have had on how Puritan colonists in America read the Bible, a brief comment about the King James Version will suffice before searching the Bible for information about Zion/New Jerusalem. Most Puritan

³⁵ Stout, 23.

³⁶ Stout, 24, emphasis added.

preachers adopted the KJV when it was published in 1611. This translation of the Bible had no commentary and no study aids and came from the established ecclesiastical authority rather than from exiles.³⁷ Undoubtedly, many factors contribute to the shift in Puritan loyalties from the Geneva Bible to the KJV. Foremost among these is probably the general Puritan loyalty to the Church of England as the authorized church of God. While they may have sharply criticized King James' policies and felt that the Church needed drastic reforming, they still viewed themselves as part of the English Church and subjects of the crown. Even the most separatist attitudes among them were not seditious. They sought the reform of the Church and the royalty, not its overthrow. Their acceptance of the KJV was perhaps an attempt to manifest their allegiance to the Church and the crown, even while they cried repentance to both institutions. Their resolve to leave England and escape what they felt were the impending judgments of God only came after they felt their cries had gone unheeded and England had, in their view, brought upon itself a scourge that they would rather not endure.

Stout pointed out that another possible reason for the shift from the Geneva Bible to the KJV allowed for something more than the Reformation emphasis on individual salvation by grace. "The new version of the Bible coincided with a period of new beginnings for the Puritan clergy. Now that the people had been indoctrinated in the truths of Holy Writ, it was possible to begin moving to the second, and more ambitious, phase of building an entire social order according to scriptural blueprint."³⁸ Their prolonged interest in the national salvation of England had overpowered the Reformation underpinnings of individual salvation found in the Geneva Bible. They wanted an entire society based upon the principles of

³⁷ Stout, 25.

³⁸ Stout, 25.

godliness as found in the Bible; they wanted Zion. And if they couldn't have it on "the island" of England, then they would just have to seek it elsewhere.

Not all of the colonists, however, were persuaded to adopt the KJV over the Geneva Bible. Even within the Puritan ranks, dissenters like Anne Hutchinson preferred the Geneva Bible emphasis on individual grace to the KJV with its possibilities of a national covenant and corporate salvation. The Puritans' competitors in the new colonies for religious authority on the continent were the Quakers, led by William Penn, who founded Pennsylvania—and who used the Geneva Bible. However, all of this did not change the fact that "the vision of a redeemer nation, which the American republic would in time come to own, was the manifestation of a sense of history that had its primary roots in Puritan Boston [and the KJV] rather than Quaker Philadelphia."³⁹

What spawned an entire movement to seek for something beyond the powerful religious innovations of individual salvation by faith and grace that earmarked the Reformation? And if such a society is possible, then how might it be established and what ought it to be like? Moreover, what would be so enticing about the possibilities for such a society that would motivate tens of thousands of people to embark on a perilous overseas adventure to a strange and potentially dangerous land? What the Puritans and many others set out to institute now becomes the subject of this search for the biblical Zion/New Jerusalem that fired the imagination and immigration of the colonists of the New World.

What is Zion?

Although there is no exact definition of the term "Zion" in the Bible, scholars have some theories as to its meaning.⁴⁰ Taking into account this etymology, it appears that Zion

³⁹ Stout, 27.

⁴⁰ For a detailed discussion of these meanings, see *ABD*, 6:1096.

has chiefly to do with protection, and given its religious context, we could add “divine” protection. The ultimate source of Zion’s protection is the claim that it is the dwelling place for God (see Ps. 9:11; 46; 50:2; 76:2; Isa. 8:18; Joel 3:17; and Zech. 2:10). This same idea carries over into the New Testament city of New Jerusalem, where God “will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev. 21:3).⁴¹ In the eighth century BC, Isaiah relates the protection of Zion, or Jerusalem, to the protection that attended their Mosaic predecessors when he refers to “a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence (Isa. 4:5; see Ex. 40:34-38).⁴² This notion of divine protection undoubtedly attracted the attention of the Puritans and the Quakers who felt the wickedness of the world in their day was provoking God to send down a scourge upon the inhabitants of Britain and Europe.

With the promise of divine protection, Zion is also a place of supreme peace. “The idea of peace is prominent in the traditions of Zion/Jerusalem, in part because the last three consonants of the holy city’s name (*slm*) appear to have been understood as related to the word for peace (*shalom*, e.g., Ps. 122:6-8).”⁴³ Accordingly, New Jerusalem—the “New City of Peace”—is described as the place where “God shall wipe all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain . . . there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie” (Rev. 21:4, 27; Cp. Isa. 52:1).⁴⁴ Thus, Zion and New Jerusalem represent the ultimate in political, social, and religious peace, “the quintessence of

⁴¹ See *ABD*, 4:1095.

⁴² A comprehensive list of all the Old Testament references to Zion as a place of divine defense or protection would be far too lengthy, so the following much abbreviated list is recommended for the interested reader: Ps. 48:1-8; 50:1-3; Isa. 60:12-14; 66:6; Joel 3:16; Zech. 9:13-15.

⁴³ *ABD*, 6:1101.

⁴⁴ *ABD*, 4:1095.

civilization and culture, of a stable lifestyle, or permanent relationships.”⁴⁵ In an environment of sanctioned religious persecution and oppression, many in the seventeenth century longed for a place where peace of all kinds prevailed.

More than just a passive place of peace and defensive protection, the biblical Zion also purports to be the “home base” of God’s operations among mortals.⁴⁶ Elaine R. Follis wrote, “The holy city [Zion or New Jerusalem] is both a meeting point for God and people and a center, a point of stability, around which the human community revolves . . . it is an image of the unity between place and people within which divine favor and civilization create a setting of stability and home.”⁴⁷ Since this will become an important idea in the American colonists’ view of their mission to the New World, let us consider a few examples of the idea from both the Old and New Testaments.

Given the points discussed thus far, the Psalmist’s reference to the “the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High [where] God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early” (Ps. 46:4-5) is clearly an allusion to Zion, whether the literal city of Jerusalem or some restored New Jerusalem. The writer of this song of praise also declares Zion’s impact upon other nations:

The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge (Ps. 46:6-11).

⁴⁵ *ABD*, 6:1103.

⁴⁶ Various Latter-Day Saint leaders have alluded to this quality of Zion in regards to America, including Mark E. Peterson (see *The Great Prologue*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975], 112) and Ezra Taft Benson (see *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], 571 - 572.) While the idea stands on its own in the Bible, the terminology I have chosen to use did not originate with me.

⁴⁷ *ABD*, 6:1103.

According to this passage, Zion becomes the harbinger of peace and stability to the rest of the world.

Zion is clearly a place of international political influence, as Isaiah prophesied: “out of Zion shall go forth the law.” But Zion’s political influence stems from its spiritual and religious significance, as Isaiah continued his prophetic message, “and the word of Lord [shall come] from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:3; see also Joel 3:16 and Micah 4:2).

This aspect of the influence of Zion on the rest of the world lasted long enough to find its way into the New Testament idea of a holy city, or a New Jerusalem. Jesus himself used the analogy of “a city on a hill [that] cannot be hid.” The candlestick of Christianity was to “give light unto all that are in the house” that all people would be led to “glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:14-16; see also Matt 28:19-20 and Luke 24:46-47). In fact, the disciples of Jesus wondered after his death if God would “at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel.” Perhaps they also recognized that the work of salvation was made more expedient when God had a base of operations. In response, they were instructed to take the Christian gospel “unto the uttermost parts of the earth” (Acts 1:6, 8).

What impact would their message have on the earth? Zechariah believed that “many nations shall be joined to the Lord” and to Zion (Zech. 2:10, 11). John’s description of New Jerusalem is not just a new island, but it is part of a “new earth” (Rev. 21:1). He also included this detail, “And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut by day . . . And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations unto it” (Rev. 21:24-26). Given the early Christian Church’s connection to Judaism, similarities ought to be

noted between Zion and New Jerusalem by comparing John's statement with Isaiah's description of "The Zion of the Holy One of Israel":

And the Gentiles shall *come to thy light*, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they *gather themselves together*, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and *flow together*, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall *come unto thee . . .* they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD . . . Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that *men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought*. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. (Isa. 60:3-12, emphasis added)

Zion and New Jerusalem are much more than an isolated pocket of believers in a world of heathens. It was believed to be a beacon not only to shine in a world covered with "gross darkness" (see Isa. 60:2), but it was to disperse that darkness and bring light into the world.

For this to happen, the Bible also designates Zion as a place of gathering for the true worshippers of God. This is clearly illustrated by the six italicized phrases in the Isaiah passage above. However, there are many others. The book of Psalms contains the idea that Zion was a place where God would "gather [his] saints together" (see Ps. 50:2, 5). Isaiah also uses the metaphor of Jehovah as a shepherd who would "gather the lambs with his arm" (see Isa. 40:9, 11). Joel spoke of the "remnant whom the Lord shall call" to gather to mount Zion (Joel 2:32). Zechariah reiterated Isaiah's imagery when he referred to the restoration of Israel as "the flock of his people" gathered to "an ensign upon his land" (Zech. 9:16). And Micah echoed Isaiah's foretelling that when Zion was established, "all nations shall flow unto it . . .

the mountain of the Lord” (Micah 4:2). Zion was a gathering place where the “gathered” could enjoy ultimate peace and divine protection as they sought to spread the same divine social, religious, and political benefits to the rest of the world.

Such an idea may be traceable to Davidic and post-Davidic Israelite attempts at “cultic centralization.”⁴⁸ In any event, the concept remained in the Bible for millennia and found its way into the religious consciousness of many New World colonists and early Americans. It is interesting to note the extensive collaboration that went into group movements of the seventeenth century. Great efforts were made for the Puritans, the Quakers, and others to migrate to various places together. The Puritans even abandoned initial attempts to move into the Netherlands because they felt the environment there threatened their cohesiveness. As the Puritans sought for a location for their Zion, we must now turn our attention to searching for the location of Zion in the Bible.

Where is Zion?

In a chapter that celebrates the victorious coronation of King David over all Israel, only passing mention is given to the fact that “David took the strong hold of Zion.” And then the whole area is quickly renamed “the city of David” (2 Sam. 5:7). If it were not destined to become such a widely used word by subsequent biblical historians and prophets, it would hardly merit any attention at all.

Geographically speaking in the Bible, Zion could be the name for four, possibly five, actual places. (New Jerusalem adds a sixth possibility that will also be discussed.) The first is the spot generally assumed to be an old Jebusite fortress on the southeast ridge of the Temple

⁴⁸ For more on the connection of Zion to “cultic centralization,” see *ABD*, 6:1100. Also refer to André Lemaire, “The United Monarchy,” in Hershel Shanks, ed., *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*, (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1999), 92-120 and Siegfried H. Horn, “The Divided Monarchy,” in Shanks, 129-199.

Mount.⁴⁹ This usage was understood by Christian scholars and writers such as St. Jerome who deduced that Zion was “a name which signifies either ‘citadel’ or ‘watch-tower.’”⁵⁰ We know nothing of the site before the 2 Samuel 5 reference from biblical or extra-biblical historical sources. And from the brevity of the original reference to the spot, it does not appear to be the location of a great battle where David or any other Israelite did anything particularly heroic. It is somewhat ironic that the conquering Israelites would incorporate into their sacred religious vocabulary and their holy national identity the name of an obscure heathen enemy fortress.⁵¹ “It is possible that this transference was aided by a mythology of Zion already held by the Jebusites, from whom David took the mountain stronghold.”⁵² Even so, for “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Ex. 19:6) to identify themselves with a subdued and, by their standards, unholy people is strange indeed.⁵³

What might seem even stranger is that “the biblical Zion traditions are usually tightly associated with the theology of the temple.”⁵⁴ The most sacred edifice in all of Jewish religion and culture, the holy temple, is “called Zion, Mt. Zion, or the holy hill of Zion.”⁵⁵ Five times, the ancient Psalmist refers to the “holy hill,” the most explicit reference to the

⁴⁹ *ABD*, 6:1096, 1098.

⁵⁰ From “Letter CVIII To Eustochium” dated approx. 404 AD, in *Early Church Fathers*, [database online] available from <http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/>, Internet.

⁵¹ The idea of Zion, or Jerusalem, as the “navel of the earth” or the “earth-center” did not arise in Midrashim literature until many centuries after ancient Hebrew prophets and historians had been using the title. (See David B. Galbraith, D. Kelly Ogden, and Andrew C. Skinner, *Jerusalem: The Eternal City*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1996], 8, footnote 16.) Thus, it would be anachronistic to argue that this was the cause for the popularity of the term *Zion* among ancient Hebrews, unless the writers of the Midrash are willing to argue that Isaiah and the others who used the title were aware of this idea. The *ABD* states, “Unfortunately, the paucity and ambiguity of the evidence prevent the indebtedness of the Zion tradition to pre-Israelite Jerusalem from moving beyond conjecture” (6:1102).

⁵² *ABD*, 6:1101.

⁵³ In chapter three of Galbraith, Ogden, and Skinner, *Jerusalem: The Eternal City*, they posit that the name Zion had earlier spiritual significance. Their position is based largely upon modern Latter-day Saint scripture, which would not have existed in the days of the Puritans.

⁵⁴ *ABD*, 6:1098.

⁵⁵ *ABD*, 6:1096.

temple being in Psalm 99:9: “Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy hill” (see also Ps. 2:6; 3:4; 15:1; and 43:3). Thus, Zion not only refers to a holy place, but the holiest place of all, the “mountain of the Lord’s house . . . the house of the God of Jacob” (Isa. 2:2, 3).

By extension, “‘Zion’ came to refer to Jerusalem itself, that is, to the entire temple city.”⁵⁶ This is evident in numerous Old Testament scriptures. The Psalmist makes the connection from the old fortress site to the entire city of David when he declares, “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King” (Ps. 48:2). It is also common in typical Hebrew parallelism for Jerusalem and Zion to be used in synonymous fashion, as in Isaiah 4:3, “And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy” (see also Isa. 40:9).

Finally, in some instances Zion was more of a national term referring “to the tribe or land of Judah, or to the whole of Israel.”⁵⁷ Explaining Israel’s divine election, the Psalmist proclaims that God “chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved” (Ps. 78:68). When Jeremiah foretold the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile, he says that “they shall ask the way to Zion,” the land of their assumed national inheritance (see Jer. 50:4-5).

Despite the intent of some, even in modern times, to limit the use of Zion strictly to one specific geographic place, one other possible consideration for the location of Zion exists that can be derived from the Bible. And it is this possibility that would open the door for other groups, such as the Puritans, “Mormons,” Methodists, Episcopalians, or anyone else, to claim the name for themselves. Zion is not only a “common appellation” for the ruins of an old Jebusite fortress, the temple, Jerusalem, and the land of Israel, but it can also be applied

⁵⁶ *ABD*, 6:1098, 1096.

⁵⁷ *ABD*, 6:1097.

generally to “God’s people.”⁵⁸ Regardless of territorial area, “They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever” (Ps. 125:1). Wherever the people of God are, there is Zion. Isaiah had taught this as early as 700 BC: “[S]ay unto Zion: Thou art my people” (Isa. 51:16). Zechariah, around 520 BC, demonstrated this usage, “O Zion, you who dwell in Fair Babylon!” (Zech. 2:11; Jewish Publication Society Version).⁵⁹ If God’s people can retain the nomenclature of Zion in Babylon, then it would appear that Zion can exist wherever “God’s people” dwell.

Even the Geneva Study Bible (the GSB), which had such wide-spread influence in the seventeenth century, offered several different interpretations of references to “mount Zion.” For example, it claims that “the mountain of [God’s] holiness” represents “his Church” (see Ps. 48:1, GSB), but just a few verses later “mount Zion” is “Jerusalem and the cities of Judea” (see Ps. 48:11, GSB).⁶⁰ In Isaiah 2:3, the GSB commentary puts forth that “the mountain of the Lord” alludes “to mount Zion [i.e. the Temple Mount], where the visible Church then was” (see Isa. 2:3, GSB). Yet, just a few chapters later, when Isaiah is referring to the divine defense “upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies,” the commentary notes that this is “meaning that God’s favour and protection should appear in every place” (see Isa. 4:5, GSB). Thus, the GSB and its influential commentary partake of the multiple uses for Zion and leave plenty of room for various applications of the term for seventeenth-century Bible-reading Christians.

The site for the future New Jerusalem is another matter entirely. Old Testament scholars nearly unanimously agreed that the idea of a New Jerusalem in the early Christian

⁵⁸ *ABD*, 6:1096.

⁵⁹ See *ABD*, 6:1098.

⁶⁰ Commentary is taken from a 1599 edition of the *Geneva Study Bible*, [book online] available from www.crosswalk.com, Internet.

church carried over from early Jewish Christians' hopes for the restoration of Jerusalem as a mighty world capital in the kingdom of God. The two possible interpretations they held for the fulfillment of the New Jerusalem prophecies, based on Old Testament exegesis, are: 1) That the old Jerusalem would be "supernaturally transformed by God" into a glorious and heavenly city of the kind we have just seen described, or 2) A "Jerusalem [would] come down from heaven which would replace the earthly Jerusalem altogether"—but would presumably still occupy the same physical location.⁶¹ But this location was not clearly elucidated in any biblical text.

However, if that is the prevailing opinion for those who believed in a literal fulfillment of Revelation 21 from the apostolic period through the Reformation, then the question must be asked: "What then prompted seventeenth century Christian colonists in the New World—such as Roger Williams, John Winthrop, John Davenport, and many others—to think that they could build a New Jerusalem in their new home?" Were they unlearned or naïve? Or were they simply dissidents from the mainstream of believers? The GSB consistently refers to the city in Revelation 21 as a metaphor for "the Church" and spiritualizes any description of the city's literal physical characteristics. Thus, it would seem that they did not get the idea from that body of widely read interpretive literature. This issue will be explored more fully in Chapter Two of this thesis, but perhaps answers to some of these questions lie in realms outside the parameters of scholarly research.⁶² No doubt, the primary definition for the location of Zion that the Puritans and others must have subscribed to is the idea that Zion is wherever "God's people" are. Since they saw themselves as God's

⁶¹ *ABD*, 4:1095.

⁶² "Even though religious people should honor the rule that they cannot offer their special revelations as the public evidence for their views, they can still reflect on the implications of such revelations within the bounds of the mainstream academy by talking about them conditionally . . . while Christians should be open to spiritual

chosen people in the seventeenth century, we must now focus on the topic of who those favored people are.

Who is Zion?

Let it be noted at the beginning of this section and remembered throughout it that this paper is not arguing nor trying to convince the reader that the Puritans, or any other particular group, were indeed God's chosen people. It is readily acknowledged that myriad groups around the world and in many different historical periods claim divine election and sanction. That is not the issue of this study. The issue is only to try to see in the Bible what the Puritans themselves would have seen as descriptive of the people of Zion and would have tried to emulate that they might lay claim to the divine presence for themselves. They wanted not just to build Zion/New Jerusalem, they wanted to *be* Zion.

Zion, as a people, in the Bible had five general attributes. The purpose will not be to discuss every doctrinal nuance of each attribute, but to present basic ideas that the Puritans would have observed as a people immersed in the Bible.

First, "They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion" (Ps. 125:1). The people of Zion must be God-fearing. They must "know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob" (Isa. 60:16). "LORD" in both verses represents "YHWH," or Jehovah, in the original Hebrew manuscripts. "YHWH" is the God of Israel in whom they must trust and have faith. At the risk of some over-simplification, suffice it to say that most Christians, even in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, viewed Jesus as the messenger, or the physical manifestation, of the God of Israel. So to believe in Jesus as Lord

influences they must not pretend to read the mind of God in assessing spiritual significance." (George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, [New York: Oxford University Press, 1997], 52, 71.)

was to also believe in the God of the Old Testament. First and foremost, those who would be Zion must believe in him who spoke of Zion through the mouths of ancient prophets.⁶³

“The biblical Zion traditions are usually tightly associated with the theology of the temple.”⁶⁴ As mentioned above, temple is often a synonym for “holy hill of Zion,” “mount Zion,” “mountain of the Lord,” “house of the God of Jacob,” etc. Although the Puritans and Quakers may not have grasped hold of this aspect of Zion as did some later groups, like Emanuel Swedenborg’s New Jerusalem Church or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the idea is certainly present in the Bible. Both the Swedenborgians and the Latter-day Saints would later build and worship in temples, though their treatment of such is dissimilar. Anciently, temples were the central place of worship for the Israelite Zion. People desiring to be Zion built and worshipped in temples.

“The city of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel!” could also only be inhabited by citizens who were “all righteous” (Isa. 60:21). Only the morally upright and spiritually clean can dwell in Zion. They must be taught God’s ways and abide by his laws (see Isa. 2:3 and Micah 4:2). John concluded his description of New Jerusalem as a metropolis where anyone who “worketh abomination, or maketh a lie” (Rev. 21:27; cp. Isa. 52:1) would not be allowed residence. Only the “redeemed” would be allowed to dwell therein and enjoy the presence of their God.

Another “antecedent of the Zion traditions lay in the ark traditions,” meaning “the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims” (1 Sam. 4:4).⁶⁵ As far as the Bible is concerned, when the city of David—Jerusalem or Zion—became the

⁶³ See also *ABD*, 6:1097.

⁶⁴ *ABD*, 6:1098.

⁶⁵ *ABD*, 6:1101.

holding place for the Ark of the Covenant, the idea of covenants became part of the traditional concept of Zion. This idea was evident even in the post-exilic prophecies of Jeremiah, who said that those who would make their “way to Zion” would say, “Come, let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten” (Jer. 50:5). Covenants were the spiritual mortar of Zion and New Jerusalem. They were what bound candidates for Zion to each other and to God.

Finally, for potential residents in Zion/New Jerusalem there seemed to be a requisite separateness from and/or triumph over worldliness that would precede the eventual incorporation of the rest of the world into Zion. Isaiah charged that all those who would come when the Lord would “bring again Zion” must “Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence [i.e. the world], touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD” (Isa. 52:8, 11). In his vision of New Jerusalem John includes this requirement for New Jerusalem citizenship: “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (Rev. 21:3, 7). Zion was a people who had overcome the temptations and tribulations of the world. They were a separate people who could then seek to bring others to Zion, or Zion to others, as well.

If someone had tried to prove in a court of law that the Puritans were a people aspiring to be Zion, they would have felt that a preponderance of the evidence supported such a claim. The Puritans believed in God and Christ. They were striving to be a morally strict and upright group that followed the biblical laws and commandments of God as they understood them. They initially participated in a covenant of grace that became the basis for a later more visible community covenant manifest in such documents as “The Mayflower Compact” and in such sermons as John Winthrop’s “Modell of Christian Charitie.” And they

were certainly separating themselves from the world to escape the spiritual deterioration they believed they witnessed in their homeland. Whether or not others believed they were Zion is nearly irrelevant. They believed they were the people of Zion and they were on a mission to build Zion. Their “errand into the wilderness” had begun.

Chapter Two—The Beginnings of Zion in “Immanuel’s Land”

For many of the leading religious and political leaders of the colonization period in the New World, Zion and New Jerusalem were the watchwords of their purpose and destiny in this land. The Puritan mind continued to be enigmatic, however.¹ My approach will be to present a sufficient amount of evidence from the writings and sermons of the Puritan colonists to show that a divine society, patterned after the biblical Zion and New Jerusalem, is exactly what they had in mind when they came to this land. My first task will be to define a few key terms for those interested in millennial studies. We will then proceed to an examination of the evidence from those whom I will call “first generation colonists” during the first half of the seventeenth century. Then we will see what the “second generation colonists” in the latter 1600s had to say about Zion/New Jerusalem. Finally, this chapter will conclude with some general considerations about the subject as it relates to Latter-day Saint history and the eschatology (“the study of end times”) of the Restoration.

¹ Robert Middlekauf, for example, argues that the Puritans were not cognizant of some divinely appointed mission (see Robert Middlekauf, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596-1728* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1971], 32.) while James Allen and Glen Leonard support my position (see James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992], 11.) For more information on and analysis of general Puritan ideology, check the following sources: George Macgregor Waller, ed., *Puritanism in early America* (Boston: Heath, 1950); Herbert Wallace Schneider, *The Puritan Mind* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958); Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: the seventeenth century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961); David D. Hall, ed., *Puritanism in seventeenth-century Massachusetts* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1968); Ziff Larzer, *Puritanism in America: new culture in a new world* (New York: Viking Press, 1973); Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); Everett H. Emerson, *Puritanism in America, 1620-1750* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977); Allen Carden, *Puritan Christianity in America: religion and life in seventeenth-century Massachusetts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990); Francis J. Bremer, *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1995); and Crawford Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium: Literature and Theology, 1550-1682* (Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 2000).

Definitions

The subject of Zion and New Jerusalem belongs to a field of study known as millennialism, or millenarianism. Biblically, Zion and New Jerusalem are events that belong to the end times of the Christian view of history that culminates in the thousand-year era of Christian reign and world peace. According to a conference held at the University of Chicago in 1960,

A religious movement is said to be millenarian when it views salvation as (a) *collective*, to be enjoyed by the faithful as a group; (b) *terrestrial*, to be realized here on earth; (c) *total*, to completely transform life on earth; (d) *imminent*, to come soon and swiftly rather than gradually; and (e) *miraculous*, to be accomplished by, or with the help of, supernatural agencies.²

Within the field of millennial studies, most scholars have agreed to classify groups who believe in a millennium in two basic schools of thought: *premillennialists* and *postmillennialists*. While no religious assembly fits perfectly and homogeneously into either category, these general guidelines help us understand the basic differences and similarities between various Jewish and Christian groups.

“Premillennialists,” suggested Latter-day Saint historian Grant Underwood, “believed that there would be *two* comings, two physical resurrections, and two judgments . . . [they] believed that Christ would come after the millennium to execute final judgment, but they also felt that there would be a kind of preliminary judgment . . . that would accompany his appearance to inaugurate the millennium.”³ They held to the “literal interpretation of prophetic passages” and generally believed that their efforts to “teach all nations” (Matt.

² Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1993), 5.

³ Underwood, 4.

28:19) would result in only a handful of converts before the actual millennial advent of Christ.⁴

Postmillennialism, on the other hand, was “often designated ‘Spiritualist’ because its advocates believed the promised Kingdom of Christ would be manifested in the reign of the Holy Spirit over the hearts of his people rather than in some material way.”⁵ Generally speaking, such believers allegorized and metaphorized the scriptures that spoke of literal discontinuous changes happening in and to the earth in the last times of its history. While they still believed in an actual return of Christ to the earth bodily, they maintained that “the thousand years represented the culmination of the gradual Christianization of the entire world and would be achieved largely through successful evangelists.”⁶ Most Puritans and other Reformers fit best into this category, while nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints would be most comfortable in the premillennial arena.⁷

Among the somewhat esoteric terms of millennial studies are the terms *chiliad*, *chiliastic*, and *chiliasm*. The chiliad is “the thousand-year period of peace that would follow the Judgment.”⁸ Those persons classified as chiliastic would believe in a literal resurrection, coming of Christ, and reign of Christ with the Saints on the earth for a thousand years. Chiliasm is most adequately characterized by a literal interpretation of the scriptures. Chiliasts put their faith in the actual fulfillment of prophecy in history. Even though some

⁴ Underwood, 4, 5.

⁵ Underwood, 4.

⁶ Underwood, 5.

⁷ There is also amillennialism, which denies the reality of the millennium (see Pam Dewey and Norman Edwards, “Which Groups Teach That There Will Be A Millennium On Earth?” [document online] available from <http://www.servantsnews.com/sn9805/s980501a.htm>, Internet. For more detailed treatment of amillennialism, see Lorraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1958), and Darrell L. Bock, ed., *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999); and Underwood, 16.

⁸ Mason I. Lowance, Jr. and David Watters, eds., “Increase Mather’s ‘New Jerusalem’: Millennialism in Late-Seventeenth-Century New England,” in *The Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 87, part 2, October 1977 (Worcester, MA: The American Antiquarian Society, 1978), 343.

rather notable religious figures were chiliasts, such as Increase Mather, chiliasm was generally looked upon as slightly fanatical and/or somewhat naïve. Later admirers of men like Increase Mather tended to de-emphasize their chiliast tendencies and focused instead on the nobility of their soul or the courage of their convictions, but this study exams solely their beliefs and teachings about the coming kingdom of God on the earth.

The First Generation Zion-builders

Just when men began thinking of this land as chosen to fulfill biblical prophecy is unclear and likely impossible to trace. But certainly Columbus employed biblical language and imagery to justify and legitimize his exploration of the New World. Years after his discovery of the New World, Columbus wrote, “God made me the messenger of the new heaven and the new earth. And he showed me the spot where to find it.”⁹ Perhaps this is the first reference historically of anyone linking the New World to Revelation 21, one of the core texts for the Zion/New Jerusalem concept.¹⁰

Before the colonization of the New World began over one hundred years later, many Puritan preachers in England were expounding the concept of an elect nation to their congregations. William Haller argues that George Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* ultimately emphasized this doctrine to its readers.¹¹ Joy Gilsdorf agreed: “Foxe’s readers could hardly escape the conclusion that England had indeed played an important part in the history of the church. Nor, by the end of his book, could they deny that England had a special apocalyptic

⁹ As quoted in Donald Skaggs, *Roger Williams’ Dream for America* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1993), 172. Skaggs is quoting Charles L. Sanford, *Quest for Paradise* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1961), but he does not give a page number.

¹⁰ For more on Christopher Columbus and his discovery of the New World in relation to the spiritual history of America and the unfolding of the Restoration, see E. Douglas Clark, *The Grand Design: America from Columbus to Zion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992). Chapter Two, entitled “Columbus and the Discovery of America,” offers some excellent bibliographical information.

¹¹ William Haller presents this argument in *The Elect Nation: The Meaning and Relevance of Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963).

mission to carry out in the near future.”¹² However, they generally viewed their position as one of upholding what they viewed as the Christian values of morality, honesty, thrift, education, Sabbath worship, etc. in anticipation of the coming kingdom of God. There was very little, if anything, ever said in England about England becoming Zion or the New Jerusalem.¹³

Another weighty idea in their developing self-image as a chosen people was that the Puritans saw themselves as the contemporary children of Israel. Woodcuts like the one in the 1560 Geneva Study Bible depicted “Israelites” dressed in the clothes of the time fleeing Egyptian armies. Their histories, letters, and sermons were fraught with allusions to their divine calling. This new “house of Israel” saw themselves fleeing the Pharaoh-like royalty and escaping repressive religious bondage. But this time, they were going to escape *before* the plagues came. Prior to leaving for New England, John Winthrop wrote to his wife: “If the Lord seeth fit it will be good for us, he will provide a shelter and a hiding place for us and ours as a Zoar for Lott.”¹⁴ He felt “that God hath provided this place [the New World] to be a refuge for many whome he meanes to save out of the generall calamity.”¹⁵ In the Puritan view, God had saved his ancient covenant people and he would save those in the current time who had also covenanted to be his people and be governed by his word.

Upon returning to England, John Smith, former governor of the colony of Virginia, spoke in St. Paul’s Churchyard in London just before his death. He praised Adam, Eve,

¹² Joy Gilsdorf, *The Puritan Apocalypse: New England Eschatology in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1989), 16.

¹³ For a broader treatment of general Puritan teachings during the pre-colonization period in England, see John R. Knott, Jr., *The Sword of the Spirit: Puritan Responses to the Bible* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1980). In his comparison of five influential Puritan preachers during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, he never mentions New Jerusalem or Zion.

¹⁴ From a letter dated, May 15, 1629, as found in *Winthrop Papers* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929-1947), microfiche, 91-92.

¹⁵ From John Winthrop, “Reasons to be Considered, and Objections with Answers,” in *Winthrop Papers*, 139.

Noah, Abraham, and the other “Hebrewes” who had been called by God to settle and colonize the earth. Then, shifting to America, he implored, “then seeing we are not borne for ourselves but each to helpe other . . . and seeing by no meanes wee would be abated of the dignitie and glorie of *our* predecessors [i.e. Adam, Eve, Abraham, and the Hebrews], let us intimate their vertues to be worthily their successors.”¹⁶ Arriving in the new land, they continued to interpret events from this perspective, as illustrated by John Smith’s explanation of a devastating illness among the natives as a plague sent by God, like those sent to Egypt in the days of Moses, to preserve and protect his people.¹⁷

Renowned Puritan historian, Harry Stout, explained:

If presented in the form of a syllogism, the American Puritans’ reasoning would go something like this:

Major premise: God’s promises of blessing and judgment recorded in Scripture apply to professing peoples as well as to individuals.

Minor premise: New England is a professing people bound in public submission to the Word of God.

Conclusion: Therefore New England is a peculiar people of God.¹⁸

How widespread was this mentality? Was it held by just a select few or was it common among the Puritans? One historian suggests the following: “If a Puritan, just come to Massachusetts Bay, had been asked what phrase would best describe his singular emigration, he might have answered, in his religious intensity and sincerity, that it should be called the New Exodus . . . Above all, both Hebrews and Puritans worshipped the same Jehovah, the statue-book of whom had become supreme authority in both theocracies.”¹⁹ Continuing into

¹⁶ Taken from a published facsimile of John Smith, “Advertisements for the Planters of New-England” in *The English Experience* (New York: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum Ltd., 1971), 10-12, emphasis added.

¹⁷ John Smith, 9.

¹⁸ Harry S. Stout, “Word and Order in Colonial New England,” in Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll, eds., *The Bible in America* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1982), 29, italics added.

¹⁹ N. H. Chamberlain, *Samuel Sewall and The World He Lived In*, 2nd ed. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967), 21-22.

the late nineteenth century, some historians were still calling the beginning of the Massachusetts Bay Colony “the great Puritan Exodus.”²⁰

Knowing the prominence of Jerusalem for ancient Israel, the Puritans, as the “new Israel,” naturally sought for a “new Jerusalem.” Having come through the wilderness, they realized that the real work yet lay ahead. Again, N. H. Chamberlain wrote, “Their Exodus had brought them to a land where the heathen raged, and the ungodly imagined vain things. They realized that it was the Land of Promise, but chiefly through the eye of prophecy, while the Holy City of Jerusalem, whose foundation stones they wrought at, as they would judge if they were now on earth, is not yet built.”²¹ They had a scriptural work to do, a biblical ideal to fulfill. They were going to build, or at the very least lay the foundations for, New Jerusalem.

To say that this was not the intent of the first generation colonists is to ignore a rather mountainous heap of evidence to the contrary. Consider John Winthrop’s sermon aboard the *Arbella* in 1630, as the first band of Puritans approached the Massachusetts Bay:

For the worke wee have in hand, it is by a mutuall consent through a speciall overruleing providence, and a more then an ordinary approbation of the Churches of Christ to seeke out a place of Cohabitation and Consorteshipp under a due forme of Government both civill and ecclesiasticall.²²

The first generation Puritans, who looked upon Winthrop and others as near prophets (often calling them “divines,” meaning the oracles of God), saw their coming to the New World and the establishment of New England as a divine injunction to build the ideal Christian ecclesiastical and political community. Through their devotion to the gospel of Christ, they

²⁰ Leonard Bacon, *The Genesis of The New England Churches* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1874), 446.

²¹ Chamberlain, 42.

²² John Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charitie,” in Paul Lauter, ed., *The Heath Anthology of American Literature* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1994), 231-232. Hereafter cited as *Heath*.

believed their efforts to build this society would be fulfilled, or they would have failed in their mission. As Winthrop both extolled and exhorted them:

The Lord will be our God and delight to dwell among us, as his owne people and will commaund a blessing upon us in all our wayes, soe that wee shall see much more of his wisdome, power, goodness, and truthe then formerly wee have been acquainted with, wee shall finde that the God of Israell is among us, when tenn of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies, when hee shall make us a prayse and glory, that men shall say of succeeding plantatcions: the lord make it like that of New England: for wee must Consider that wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us; soe that if wee shall deal falsely with our god in this worke wee have undertaken and soe cause him to withdrawe his present help from us, wee shall then be made a story and a by-word through the world.²³

Winthrop then reiterated the Deuteronomic covenant (see Deuteronomy 30:1-3) and closed his sermon with a poetic version of Joshua 24:15 challenging the colonists to “Choose ye this day” whether they would take on this high and holy task or falter at the gates.

Although Winthrop never uttered the words “Zion” or “New Jerusalem” in this sermon, he clearly stated what kind of society the Puritans were out to establish. In nearly every respect, it was a society that fits exactly the mold created in Chapter One of this thesis regarding the Puritan understanding of who the people of Zion were.²⁴

Even the Pilgrims who preceded the Puritans by a decade on this land expressed some interesting intentions that witness a sense of being led by Deity to accomplish a great work. In his explanation of why Holland was not the chosen place for the Separatists, William Bradford wrote, “Lastly, and which was not least, a great hope and inward zeal they had of laying some good foundation, or at least to make some way thereunto, for the propagating and advancing the Gospel of the Kingdom of CHRIST in those remote parts of the world: yea, though they should be stepping stones unto others, for the performing of so great a

²³ Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charitie,” as cited in *Heath*, 233.

²⁴ See Chapter One of this thesis, pp. 28-30.

work.”²⁵ One must ask the question, A foundation for what? This thesis aims to show that the great work was the establishment of Zion and the building of the city of God.

In his history *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Bradford cites the “Constitution of the New England Confederation, 19 May 1643” to illustrate what the colonists had envisioned: “Whereas we all came into these parts of America with one and the same end and aim, namely to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and to enjoy the Liberties of the Gospel in purity and peace . . . That *as in Nation and Religion*, so in other respects, we be and continue One, according to the tenor and true meaning of the ensuing Articles.”²⁶ Clearly the first generation of settlers, beginning in Plymouth and continuing with the Bay Colony, had grand and heavenly visions for a nation whose ultimate governor would be God and whose law book would be the Bible (see Rev. 20:12-13).²⁷ This, of course, must be understood in the larger context of how they viewed Zion, as a people who followed the God of the Bible and sought to establish a material commonwealth patterned after biblical principles.

Two of the most prominent preachers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony who also had big plans for this “city on the hill” in the New World were Thomas Goodwin and John Cotton. They were classic examples of Puritan postmillennialism, expecting “this great reformation to develop out of a historical process that had already been in progress for several centuries . . . What Goodwin and Cotton envisaged was a great period within history

²⁵ William Bradford, as cited in Edward Arber, ed., *The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers, 1606-1623 A.D.: as told by Themselves, their Friends, and their Enemies* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, & Co., 1897), 266-267.

²⁶ Samuel Eliot Morison, ed., *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647, by William Bradford* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), 431, emphasis added.

²⁷ In addition to the sources already cited in Chapter One, see also Ken Spiro, “The Impact of the Bible, Part Three: In God We Trust” [article online] available at http://www.aish.com/jewishissues/amongthenations/Impact_of_the_Bible_3_In_God_We_Trust.asp, Internet. He gives some other useful sources on that web page.

during which it would be given to the saints to restrain evil through the righteous exercise of civil and ecclesiastical authority. It would be a thousand-year extension of the New England Way.”²⁸ In Goodwin’s and Cotton’s minds, the Puritans were performing the great preparatory work for the millennial kingdom of Christ. This involved setting up a society that would model as closely as possible the New Jerusalem of the Bible, so they could more easily make the transition into their great millennial reign on the earth.

They also believed they were making encouraging progress. Cotton wrote to his friend, John Davenport, inviting him “to come to America by sending him reports—if we can take Cotton Mather’s word for it—‘that the order of the churches and the commonwealth was now so settled in New England, by common consent, that it brought into his mind the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.’”²⁹ This direct allusion to Revelation 21 indicates that they certainly had New Jerusalem in mind and were actively doing what they felt they had been chosen to do to fulfill their divine commission.

John Davenport did come to America, and he desired to go a little farther than most of his Puritan colleagues. Joy Gilsdorf offers this brief synopsis of his career intentions:

By 1638 [Davenport] was safely established in New Haven. There he set out to create a church of even greater righteousness than those of Massachusetts. If the Bay Colony brought to mind the new heaven and the new earth, New Haven was intended to exemplify the quintessence of purity. As Cotton Mather later put it, Davenport’s objective was to do “all that was possible to render the renowned church of New-Haven like the New-Jerusalem.”³⁰

Davenport’s unflinching chiliasm made his evangelical minister friends uncomfortable at times. In 1667, he reprimanded those who lacked faith in a material kingdom of Christ with these words: “some acknowledge no kingdom of Christ on earth, but spiritual and invisible in

²⁸ Gilsdorf, 73.

²⁹ Gilsdorf, 74.

³⁰ Gilsdorf, 74-75.

the hearts of the elect. The kingdom of Christ hath indeed been set up by his effectual operation of the spirit in the Ministry of the Gospel . . . But there is another, a Political Kingdom of Christ to be set up in the last times.”³¹ Perhaps it was not so much Davenport’s excitement about a literal kingdom of Christ on earth that disturbed those around him, but that such talk suggested revolution and independence, which most Puritans did not advocate.

It should be remembered that Edward Winslow’s reasons for choosing America for their new, model Christian colony still dominated Puritan consciousness. In short, he gave four reasons for their coming to the New World, instead of seeking a haven in Europe: 1) That they might enjoy the “favour with the King and State of England as to have their protection there, where we might enjoy the like liberty”; 2) they sought a land “where, the LORD favouring our endeavours by his blessing, we might *exemplarily* shew our tender [*loving*] countrymen, by our example, [they being] no less burdened than ourselves, where they might live and comfortably subsist; and enjoy the like liberties with ourselves, being freed from antichristian bondage”; 3) they wanted to “keep their names and nation”; and 4) they saw their commission not only to “be a means to enlarge the dominions of our State, but [of] the Church of Christ also, if the LORD have a people amongst the natives whither we would bring us.”³² Originally, the Puritans in Massachusetts Bay had no intentions of seeking independence from England. In fact, they wanted to maintain those connections for political, financial, and perhaps military benefits that would come from such a powerful world ally. Davenport’s talk about a new “Political Kingdom of Christ” threatened these early core

³¹ Gilsdorf, 75.

³² As cited in Arber, 263, emphasis added.

Puritan ideas and would probably have been monitored closely, downplayed appropriately, and perhaps even censured.³³

However, not everyone who came to the New World seeking Zion was as content to maintain political securities at the cost of possible failure in the holy experiment. Roger Williams came to Boston aboard the *Lyon* in 1631 and willingly accepted and fulfilled appointments in the area as a preacher for a time. He soon became disenchanted with what he saw as only minimal reforms in the churches in America and sought for a better way. He was exiled from Massachusetts in 1636 and bought land from the Narragansett Indians to the west to form the colony of Rhode Island.

Roger Williams' ambition was to be a citizen of Zion. He saw the corruption in the Catholic and Anglican churches as unreformable. He maintained his Puritan belief that Christianity needed to be cleansed and a system of true worship needed to be reestablished before Christ would come again to the earth. His efforts in Rhode Island were not meant to be the New Jerusalem, but he sought to do everything in his power to create the right conditions that New Jerusalem could be established by a new gospel dispensation. He believed that God would procure the success of his religious freedom experiment because it was fundamental for the establishment of Zion throughout the world. The example of Rhode Island in securing the liberty of religious conscience would spread to the colonies and eventually to the rest of the world to affect the proper conditions for Christ to return to a

³³ William Haller supports the idea that New Jerusalem was often viewed as a politically threatening notion: "It was not merely that some of [the Puritans'] more reckless supporters . . . from time to time launched ill-considered attacks upon the prelates. Belief in the eventual coming of the New Jerusalem and triumphing of the saints, too confidently proclaimed from the pulpit, led some men to grow impatient with the slow processes of reform and to attempt the erection of the true church for themselves in their own time" (William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism, Or, The way to the New Jerusalem as set forth in pulpit and press from Thomas Cartwright to John Lilburne and John Milton, 1570-1643* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1938, 175).

world where all men knew the Lord and were willing to worship and follow only Him as their legitimate Lawgiver.³⁴

Anne Hutchinson and Solomon Stoddard, who opposed the rising national identity of covenants and divine election, also subscribed to this view. Anne Hutchinson was exiled for her rebellion and refusal to follow Puritan leadership (and eventually sought refuge in Rhode Island with Roger Williams). Stoddard stayed in the mainstream enough to be able to stay in Massachusetts and fight his cause from within. However, even Stoddard used the imagery and language of Zion in his sermons. For example, he hoped that his sermon "A guide to Christ" would be "serviceable to private Christians who are inquiring the way to Zion."³⁵ He wanted to focus on the individual covenant of grace rather than the corporate system of salvation favored by Winthrop, Davenport, and others.

Regardless of the opposition, the idea of this errand into the New World to build Zion/New Jerusalem spread throughout the colonies. Not only was it promulgated from the pulpit, but also it was intermingled with politics during the traditional "Election Day Sermons" of the time. Neal Lambert wrote that one of the underlying notions of their discourses on these fundamental political days was the idea that the colonists had been given "a commission and errand to establish an exemplary social order . . . the communal task was the establishment of Zion, the building of spiritual temples, and the preparation for an ideal

³⁴ For more information on Roger Williams and his teachings regarding New Jerusalem and America, see Donald Skaggs, *Roger Williams' Dream for America*; also Perry Miller, ed., *Complete Writings of Roger Williams* (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1963), 7 vols. Volume seven is especially focused on some of Williams' writings as a seeker of Zion and the New Jerusalem.

³⁵ Solomon Stoddard, *A guide to Christ: The way of directing souls who are under the work of conversion* (Northampton, MA: printed by Andrew Wright, 1816), reprinted by New York: Readex Microprint, 1977, Early American imprint series, Second series, no. 39016, microfiche.

'New Jerusalem.'"³⁶ Using a 1672 sermon by Thomas Thacher, Lambert shows that "even after forty years of colonial experience, American puritans were measuring the significance of their lives and the condition of their colony against a biblical prototype [i.e. Zion], an ideological pattern that had not changed since the beginning."³⁷

This constant deluge of Zion/New Jerusalem rhetoric convinced even the common colonist that the work of God was being done in the New World.³⁸ John Hull alluded to their identity as the new Israel and their purpose to build a new Jerusalem in his "Diary of Public Occurrences": "God therefore moved the hearts of many to transport themselves far off beyond the seas, into this our New England . . . to spend and be spent for the advancement of this work that the Lord had to perform, and to make this wilderness as Babylon was once to Israel . . . He also made this Babylon like a Jerusalem."³⁹ John Hull saw the migration of the Puritans, which brought between 12,000 and 20,000 people to the colonies in the 1630s and 1640s, as a divinely appointed exodus to establish the kingdom of Christ on the earth and bring about a holy Jerusalem on the new land.

Thomas Parker, an unmistakable premillennial chiliast, prognosticated that the Antichrist (the Puritan synonym for the Pope) would fall and New Jerusalem would be established by 1650 (or 1860).⁴⁰ It would only be necessary for this theocratic society to exist

³⁶ Neal Lambert, "Fellowcitizens with the Saints: The Communal Voice of New England's Election Sermons," in Richard H. Cracroft, Jane D. Brady, and Linda Hunter Adams, eds., *Colloquium: Essays in Literature and Belief* (Provo: Brigham Young University, 2001), 271.

³⁷ Lambert, 273-274.

³⁸ While I have used the term 'rhetoric' here, I agree with Neal Lambert that the language employed by the Puritans was born out of "spontaneous" zeal. They spoke and wrote without any "desire to manipulate, but rather from the conviction that the defining tropes and figures [were] right and true." See Lambert, 288.

³⁹ In Sacvan Bercovitch, ed., *A Library of American Puritan Writings: The Seventeenth Century, Volume 7: Puritan Personal Writings: Diaries* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1982), 167-168.

⁴⁰ As will be seen throughout this work, date setting for the Second Coming is an especially premillennial characteristic. The premillennial tendency toward scriptural literalism led such believers to attach real events and time frames to the symbolic dates and time periods in the Bible (i.e. the 1260 days from Revelation 12 represented 1260 years, and so forth). The different dates selected by Parker are the result of selecting different historical events from which to begin counting the 1260 years.

for about 45 years, according to his calculations, and then Christ would return and the millennium would begin.⁴¹

The apocalyptic vision of the New England preachers was not limited to the ecclesiastical leaders only. Joy Gilsdorf offers good evidence that this view had become quite commonplace among the regular citizens of the colonies:

[Edward] Johnson, a carpenter, wrote the first history of Massachusetts Bay Colony ever to be published. Entitled *The Wonder-Working Providence of Sion's Savior in New England*, Johnson's history indicates the degree to which the apocalyptic conception of New England's destiny had taken hold of the imagination of the rank and file of the colonists. As its title suggests, the history was meant to depict the triumph of Christ over Satan in His American colony."⁴²

The ultimate establishment of Zion, a New Jerusalem in the New World, represented the ultimate triumph of Christ in the colonization effort. It was the opportunity that was sacred and unique to the Puritan consciousness, not the land itself.

The Puritans were not the only first-generation colonists interested in building Zion and preparing for the New Jerusalem. Even some of the Quakers in England were employing usage of the rhetoric to spread their message of the imminent coming of Christ's kingdom. William Dewsbury published a sermon he originally gave in York Castle in 1663 entitled, "The Word of the Lord, to his Beloved City New-Jerusalem, come from God, cloathed with the excellency of the Glory of his Love; and is the Bride the Lamb's Wife, with the Flowings of the tender compassionate bowels of the Lord Jesus, to all the Mourners in Sion, and the afflicted desolate People, who waite for his coming as for the Morning, and hath not satisfaction in any thing but in the enjoyment of his sweet and comfortable presence." In 1663, many Quakers had already begun to settle in America, and no doubt they were part of

⁴¹ Gilsdorf, 78.

⁴² Gilsdorf, 86.

Dewsbury's audience, which was "the holy Assemblies of the Church of the firstborn, where she is scattered to the ends of the Earth."⁴³

Generally, Quakers were a brand of postmillennialists, who believed that when a person was spiritually reborn and regenerated through Christ, that person entered into the heavenly, or new, Jerusalem. There was no need for a corporeal city in their view, because Zion was within the heart of each born again witness of Jesus. While this was not the dominant view in New England during this period, some believed it and sought to seriously discredit or nullify any attempts to build New Jerusalem, since God "dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24) but only in the sanctuary of the human heart. Although the first generation colonists and the preachers of the New World did not always agree on how to build the New Jerusalem, when it would come, or where it would be built, they mostly agreed that they lived in a preparatory time that would precede the most glorious age in the history of Christianity and build up a society of believers prepared to welcome the reigning King of kings.⁴⁴

The Second Generation of American Zion-Seekers

As we have already seen, the idea that the colonists were on an errand from on high was firmly established in the first generation of New World immigrants. What would the next generation do with the legacy they inherited from their fathers? Would they simply shrug it off as the vain imaginations of a zealous group of religious fanatics? Would they

⁴³ William Dewsbury, "The Word of the Lord, to his Beloved City New-Jerusalem, come from God, cloathed with the excellency of the Glory of his Love; and is the Bride the Lamb's Wife, with the Flowings of the tender compassionate bowels of the Lord Jesus, to all the Mourners in Sion, and the afflicted desolate People, who waite for his coming as for the Morning, and hath not satisfaction in any thing but in the enjoyment of his sweet and comfortable presence," (London: s.n., 1663), in L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT. For more biographical information on Dewsbury, see Frances Anne Budge, *Annals of the early Friends* (London: Samuel Harris, 1877).

⁴⁴ See Gilsdorf, 88.

give up in the face of some of the enormous challenges and obstacles? The next generation could easily derail the holy experiment through carelessness, neglect, or disbelief.

However, this was not to be. Zion/New Jerusalem, for the most part, was built up and sustained in the latter half of the seventeenth century by the inspirational preaching of men such as Increase Mather and the histories of New England by men such as Nathaniel Morton and Samuel Sewall. Their task was primarily one of reinforcing the vision of their fathers and adding their energy and enthusiasm to the cause of Zion. The mere writing of such history indicates an emerging national identity separate from their English heritage.

One such history was written by Nathaniel Morton, the Secretary to the Court for the Jurisdiction of New Plymouth. The opening paragraph of Morton's *New England's Memorial*, published in 1667, indicates the zeal many had for maintaining New England's religious moorings:

In the year 1602, divers godly Christians of our English nation, in the north of England, being studious of Reformation; and therefore not only witnessing against human inventions and additions in the Worship of GOD, but minding most the positive and practical part of Divine Institutions: they entered into a Covenant to walk with GOD, and one with another, in the enjoyment of the Ordinances of GOD, according to the primitive pattern in the Word of GOD.⁴⁵

Covenants, unity, and a return to the primitive pattern of true Christian worship all resonate within the walls of biblical Zion, the context from which the Puritan message continued to issue forth to the masses.

Morton was not alone in his historical reminiscence of the colonies' spiritual roots. In 1697, Samuel Sewall published an extensive treatise on the place of the New World in the Puritan eschatological view. It was entitled *Phaenomena Quaedam Apocalyptica*, and in it

⁴⁵ Edward Arber, ed., *The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers, 1606-1623 A.D.; as told by Themselves, their Friends, and their Enemies* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, & Co., 1897), 48.

Sewall “set out to prove that America would be the site of New Jerusalem in the coming millennium.”⁴⁶ As part of his somewhat nostalgic call, he “reminded his readers, the first town in Massachusetts Bay . . . was called Salem, ‘which may give occasion to hope, that GOD intendeth to write upon these Churches the Name of New Jerusalem: They shall be near of Kin to, and shall much resemble the City of GOD.’ Sewall’s faith that the churches of his land would ultimately ‘much resemble’ New Jerusalem—in spite of their declensions—reaffirmed the apocalyptic spirit in which the first generation had created the New England Way.”⁴⁷ The second generation sensed that the vision of their forefathers may be fading and sought desperately to employ whatever devices they could find, whether sentimental or historical, to rivet the attention of the next generation on the purpose for which they had been brought, or born, into this “new earth.”

These second-generation Puritans continued to preach Zion/New Jerusalem from the pulpit and publish their sermons to be read and studied by the people. They hoped to reconcile their wandering sheep to the will of the Shepherd who led them to this promised pasture. Robert Middlekauf reported correctly that the word “errand” did not occur until this next generation of preachers, perhaps by Samuel Danforth in an election day sermon of 1670 entitled “A Briefe Recognition of New England’s Errand into the Wilderness.” But the second-generation colonists were on an errand by then to maintain the fervor for *the* errand begun by their predecessors. They maintained “that New England could possibly fulfill the promises of scripture by becoming the antitype [or, the fulfillment of biblical types or tropes]

⁴⁶ Gilsdorf, 133.

⁴⁷ Gilsdorf, 136.

to Old Israel's typological prefigurations [in] an affirmation of the vision of the first generation" colonists.⁴⁸

William Torrey, who lived until 1690, referred to himself as a "very old man" when he published his sermon "A brief discourse concerning futurities or things to come" in Boston. His chiliastic premillennial sermon addresses such subjects as the first resurrection, the burning of the Old World, the battle of Armageddon, and the coming of New Jerusalem upon the earth. Undoubtedly, he was pleading with the people to be patient and faithful, even though it may appear as though their hopes and dreams would not reach fruition. He endeavored to point their minds toward those things that would give them hope, and perhaps instill a little fear, in staving the course set by the first generation of American Zion builders.⁴⁹

The most influential preacher of the closing decades of the seventeenth century was indisputably Increase Mather. He served as pastor of the Puritan church in Boston and as the President of Harvard College. He was an unshakable chiliast, affirming the literal Millennium and Second Coming of Christ, as well as a bodily resurrection and the literal restoration of Israel to precede the messianic reign.

However, in his preaching he sought to maintain a balance between radical premillennialism and spiritualist postmillennialism. He cautioned date setters, "one should not presume to calculate precisely the movement of the Lord."⁵⁰ But he also warned, "For

⁴⁸ Lowance and Watters, 347.

⁴⁹ William Torrey, "A brief discourse concerning futurities or things to come" (Boston: Printed and sold by Edes and Gill, at their printing-office, next to the prison, in Queen-Street, n.d.), reprinted by New York: Readex Microprint, 1985, Early American imprint series, 1st series ; no. 8048, microfiche. As good evidence that the Puritans were not above using "a little fear" to keep people on track, see Michael Wigglesworth, "Day of Doom," Stephen Lawson, ed., [document online] available from <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/WCarson/wiggindx.htm>, Internet.

⁵⁰ Middlekauf, 181.

Men to make *Allegories* where there are none, is to obtrude their own Imaginations instead of Scripture.”⁵¹ A biographer noted that Increase Mather’s literalist attitude toward the scriptures

meant a fundamental revision of the Christian world view tradition since Augustine, for it had been Augustine more than any other who had created Revelations 20 as an allegory and so removed hopes of a real, earthly utopia from the minds of the faithful. Mather wrote, “If Men allow themselves this Liberty of Allegorizing, we may at last Allegorize Religion into nothing but Fancy, and say that the Resurrection is past already.”⁵²

His discourse on New Jerusalem discusses the doctrines relative to it and the fulfillment of prophecies concerning its establishment in great detail. He also teaches what kind of people will be needed to build this godly society and how one can go about evaluating whether or not he or she is a fit candidate for citizenship in the glorious community. His moving use of language and rousing descriptions of life in New Jerusalem undoubtedly inspired many to conform their lives to the New England Way.

While the Puritans were the main group seeking Zion in the New World, they were not the only group. By the end of the seventeenth century, tens of thousands of immigrants from many different sects had flocked to the new land. As we have already noted, the Quakers were among this group. Some of them had expectations and desires similar to their Puritan neighbors.

William Penn, America’s well-known Quaker and the founder of Pennsylvania, also had a divine purpose in mind for his new settlement. Although the Quakers in general were classic spiritual postmillennialists, “Penn’s understanding of Christian history was closer to

⁵¹ Lowance and Watters, 349.

⁵² As cited in Michael G. Hall, *The Last American Puritan: The Life of Increase Mather, 1639-1723* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 274-275.

most Puritans' than to the Quakers Anabaptist outlook."⁵³ The Puritan vision of biblical chronology was contagious, and William Penn had caught the fever. The main thrust of his eschatological message was the victorious theme, "There were great revolutions at hand that would culminate in the setting up of the glorious kingdom of Christ in the world."⁵⁴

As Melvin B. Endy explains, "The essential characteristic of the socio-political doctrine of Friends in the seventeenth century, however, was not their coercive tendency but their belief that the kingdom of God was breaking into history and that a truly Christian society of willing men in loving dependence on God and mutual service to each other was a distinct possibility."⁵⁵ On March 4, 1681, when Pennsylvania was granted its charter,

Penn was no less certain about the nature of the religious goal to be achieved by his efforts. It was "that an example and standard may be set up to the nations" of an ideal Christian society . . . In most of Penn's early correspondence with the colonists, one finds evidence of his belief that Pennsylvania was center-stage in history. The eyes of remote countries as well as neighboring regions were believed to be fixed on the young colony . . . The "holy experiment" in Pennsylvania was their opportunity to show that a society founded and operated along the lines of Quaker ideals not only could work but was the answer to mankind's ills.⁵⁶

One can clearly hear the echoes from John Winthrop aboard the *Arbella* and Roger Williams exiled in Rhode Island in William Penn's ambitious vision for his colony of Christian followers. Although Penn may not have used the words Zion and New Jerusalem as often as his Puritan contemporaries, the concepts of this holy society of believers as found in the Bible were as much a part of his attempts at a godly, Christian commonwealth as anyone else's.⁵⁷

⁵³ Melvin B. Endy, Jr., *William Penn and Early Quakerism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 119.

⁵⁴ Endy, 125.

⁵⁵ Endy, 313-314.

⁵⁶ Endy, 349.

⁵⁷ Consider the following scriptures in context of the excerpt from Penn's charter: Ps. 48; Isa. 5:26; 11:10-12; and Zech. 2:10-11.

With every Sabbath discourse, every nostalgic history, and every election day sermon, the idea of Zion and the eventual establishment of New Jerusalem upon this continent sunk deeper and deeper into the emerging American soul. Every time a new colony was begun, Zion spread further abroad in the land (see Zech. 1:17). How all of this relates to the rise of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is still two chapters away, but pointing out some general considerations will help make the connections clearer when this study arrives at that point.

General considerations: Seventeenth-century Zion and “Mormonism”

Eight fundamental concepts taught by the colonists have close association to Latter-day Saint views regarding Zion and New Jerusalem. First, covenants were essential to establishing Zion in the New World. Perry Miller asserted that covenants were “the marrow of Puritan divinity.” He explained, “The covenant therefore, is the only method by which God deals with man at all. Salvation is not conveyed by simple election, influence, promise, or choice; it comes only through the covenant and only to those who are in the covenant with God.”⁵⁸ Covenants, made through baptism and other formal confessions of faith and devotion, were literally the backbone of the Christian commonwealth.

Second, as Neal Lambert wrote, “New England puritans saw themselves not just as similar to, but, indeed, *as* God’s chosen people.”⁵⁹ As John Winthrop testified aboard the *Arbella*: “the Lord will be our God and delight to dwell among us, as his own people and will commaund a blessing upon us in all our wayes, soe that wee shall see much more of his wisdom, power, goodness, and truthe then formerly wee have been acquainted with.”⁶⁰ The

⁵⁸ Perry Miller, “The Marrow of Puritan Divinity,” in Alden T. Vaughn and Francis J. Brener, eds., *Puritan New England: Essays on Religion, Society, and Culture* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1977), 51.

⁵⁹ Lambert, 270.

⁶⁰ Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charitie,” as cited in *Heath*, 233.

Puritans had no doubt about their divine commission to perform a particular and peculiar work in the New World.

As they approached the dangerous, unknown world, John Winthrop also pleaded for unity, a fundamental element of any Zion society: “wee must be knitt together in this worke as one man . . . allwayes having before our eyes our Commission and Community in the worke, our Community as members of the same body, soe shall we keepe the unities of the spirit in the bond of peace.”⁶¹ What has historically become known as the fierce intolerance among the Puritans was born of “an overwhelming desire to erect closely knit, socially harmonious, relatively homogenous communities, dedicated to achieving earthly felicity and abiding by the Word of God. Discord (and dispersal) would destroy all.”⁶²

This sense of unity was part of the idea that they were being gathered together for a special purpose. As John Hull noted in his diary, “God therefore moved the hearts of many to transport themselves far off beyond the seas, into this our New England, and brought, year after year, such as might be fit materials for a Commonwealth in all respects.” John Winthrop wrote to “such whose hartes God shall move to joyne with them” in their holy endeavor.⁶³ He pointed out that they were being gathered to “this place to be a refuge for many to save out of the generall calamity” and “growe stronge and prosper” in preparation for “some great worke in hand which [God] hath revealed to his prophetts among us.”⁶⁴

Fourth, as advocated by John Davenport, the New Jerusalem was the capital of “a Political Kingdom of Christ.” John Winthrop set forth the Puritan desire for “a place of

⁶¹ Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charitie,” as cited in *Heath*, 233.

⁶² Ronald D. Cohen, “Church and State in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts: Another Look at the Antinomian Controversy,” in Alden T. Vaughn and Francis J. Brener, eds., *Puritan New England: Essays on Religion, Society, and Culture* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1977), 175.

⁶³ Winthrop, *Winthrop Papers*, 138.

⁶⁴ Winthrop, *Winthrop Papers*, 139, 140.

Cohabitation and Consorteshipp under a due forme of Government both civill and ecclesiastical.” Although they did not seek immediate secession from England, the Puritans sought to set up a kingdom within the British Empire that would serve as the prelude to the literal theocracy to come at the Second Coming. If nothing else, they believed it would at least give them time to practice running a godly government in preparation for the rule of Saints upon the earth during the Millennium.

As shown in Chapter One, one of the most coveted aspects of Zion is the ultimate peace that exists therein (see Rev. 21:4). The very name of Jerusalem is “city of peace.” The Puritans sought a new peace that could not be found amidst the religious tyranny and oppression that prevailed in Europe. Timothy Breen and Stephen Foster point out that “historians of seventeenth-century Massachusetts have ignored the Bay Colony’s most startling accomplishment, fifty years of relative social peace.”⁶⁵ They report that from 1630 to 1684, “the Bay Colony avoided significant social and political disorder: no riots, no mobs, no disruptions of the judicial process by gangs of aggrieved plaintiffs.”⁶⁶ Many will criticize some of the Puritans’ methods for maintaining peace. They may also legitimately argue that they were not completely free from crime, but standing next to some of the other colonies there was a time when the Boston colony truly did seem as “a city on a hill.”

No one, however, will argue with the fact that the Puritans sought diligently to establish a holy society of devoted followers of Christ, who had committed themselves to following his ways and submitting themselves to his laws. The colonists, especially in Massachusetts, were renowned for their observance of the Sabbath day and for their devotion

⁶⁵ Timothy H. Breen and Stephen Foster, “The Puritans’ Greatest Achievement: A Study of Social Cohesion in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts,” in Alden T. Vaughn and Francis J. Brener, eds., *Puritan New England: Essays on Religion, Society, and Culture* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1977), 110.

⁶⁶ Breen and Foster, 111.

to scripture study and prayer. They upheld high standards of moral purity and extolled the goodness of sobriety and pure speech. They saw their religion as a “familiar and constant practise.”⁶⁷ They essayed to be the worthy citizens of the “holy city of God.”

This leads to our final point. They believed they were building the city that had no need of sun or moon, for the God of heaven would dwell therein (see Rev. 21:23). John Winthrop’s conviction was that if they succeeded in this experiment, “the Lord will be our God and delight to dwell among us.” In a stirring jeremiad⁶⁸ of February 1674, Increase Mather declared, “‘This is *Immanuel’s land*. Christ by a wonderful Providence hath dispossessed Satan, who reigned securely in these Ends of the Earth, for Ages the Lord Knoweth how many, and here the Lord hath caused as it were *New Jerusalem* to come down from Heaven; He dwels in this place.’”⁶⁹ If the inhabitants of the ‘new earth’ could live worthy of his presence, they believed the God of heaven would come down and dwell in their midst and bestow upon them all the blessings and glories of heaven.

Unfortunately, it was not to be. The reasons for the failure of the seventeenth century attempts to build Zion/New Jerusalem are the subject for another study altogether. Despite their best intentions, history has shown that if Zion was destined to be built on the American continent, it was not to be in the 1600s. The progress, or declension, of “the errand” now becomes the subject of the next chapter.

⁶⁷ Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charity,” as cited in *Heath*, 232.

⁶⁸ Jeremiads are sermons discussing the last days; generally, these sermons were aimed at encouraging congregations to repent and prepare for the Second Coming and the Final Judgment.

⁶⁹ Hall, *The Last American Puritan: The Life of Increase Mather*, 99.

Chapter Three—The Errand in a Rising Nation

During the eighteenth century, the population in the New World multiplied by more than nineteen times, from an estimated 275,000 in 1700 to 5.3 million in 1800.¹ This century also underwent significant political, social, and religious upheavals of all kinds, such as Queen Anne's War, King George's War, the French and Indian War, the Great Awakening, the Boston Massacre, the American Revolutionary War, the Continental Congresses, the Declaration of Independence, and controversies over taxes, slavery, and the manner of government in the new independent colonies. Amidst all of this, what happened to the vision and idea of Zion and New Jerusalem in the equally important religious theology in America? That is the sole question for this chapter.

Although the young nation was growing quickly, this study focuses on the region of the Restoration. This chapter will attempt to show how the Puritan ideal of Zion, part of the vision of the "New England Way," faded somewhat and began to dissipate into etherealness foreign to what became the early Latter-day Saint concept of New Jerusalem. This section of the thesis examines what became of the Zion/New Jerusalem ideas in the field of eighteenth-century mainstream American religion, in contemporary literature and hymns, and in American utopian experiments. In a century that Latter-day Saints consider so full of crucial events that led to the founding of the Church, it ought to be of some interest what happened during this final preparatory century to the doctrine of Zion/New Jerusalem, a critical concept to the early membership of the Church.

¹ Donna Campbell, "Brief Timeline of American Literature and Events, 1700-1749" [document online], available from <http://www.gonzaga.edu/faculty/campbell/enl310/1701.htm>, Internet, and Donna Campbell "Brief Timeline of American Literature and Events, 1800-1809" [document online], available from <http://www.gonzaga.edu/faculty/campbell/enl310/1801.htm>, Internet.

The Lights in the Hill-top City Fade

Understanding how the concept of Zion underwent a rather important change in the eighteenth century requires a brief return to late seventeenth-century conversations between Increase Mather and a London-based fellow Puritan preacher named Richard Baxter, an older and more spiritualist postmillennialist. Baxter tried to convince Mather, an incurable ideological literalist premillennialist, that the “Glorious Kingdom of Christ” would come in a less supernatural, more humanistic way. Michael Hall concludes, “In the course of time, Jonathan Edwards would advance ideas similar to Baxter’s, and they would enter the mainstream of American millennial thought. Increase Mather’s expectations would become a minority view and be taken up by the Millerites of the nineteenth century and literalists of the twentieth.”² Increase’s convictions remained irrevocable, although his hopes for Zion to come in his lifetime dimmed dramatically as he grew older.

Granted, there were a few who kept the faith, such as Judge Samuel Sewall who preferred a site in Mexico for the descent of the New Jerusalem. While Increase’s own son, Cotton, agreed that the New Jerusalem would be a literal place, he did not concur with Sewall’s Mexican prognostication.³ Cotton Mather maintained throughout the early part of his ministry that the first generation of colonizers had indeed come to the New World on a divine errand to establish New Jerusalem.⁴ For that reason, Cotton becomes a concise case study for at least one reason why the vision began to fade in the 1700s.

Like most Puritan New England preachers, Cotton Mather saw the closing decades of

² Michael G. Hall, *The Last American Puritan: The Life of Increase Mather, 1639-1723* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 279.

³ John S. Erwin, *The Millennialism of Cotton Mather: An Historical and Theological Analysis* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 54.

⁴ Erwin, 55.

the 1600s and the opening decades of the 1700s as a period of spiritual decline, often referred to as “the declension.”⁵ Jonathan Edwards reflected on it as “a time of extraordinary dulness in religion.”⁶ On his American tour, the famous English preacher George Whitefield decried the pride of Boston and warned, “It has the form kept up very well, but has lost much of the power of religion.”⁷ John Erwin concurs, “The general practice of religion was not being decried by eighteenth-century ministers in New England, but a falling away from a specific religion—the New England Way. The New England Way preached by the first-generation ministers to the colonies included a utopian [i.e. Zion/New Jerusalem] vision.”⁸

And as with most American ministers of religion at the time, “Mather’s nationalistic salvation waned as the place of the individual’s soul before God took precedence. Why after years of support for New England’s errand did his nationalistic millennialism fade? It was more a shift in degree than kind. It was not so much that Mather abandoned the New England Way and the errand into the wilderness as much as he felt a priority for the individual’s soul.”⁹ While Hall correctly reports that Jonathan Edwards’ spiritual interpretations of Zion/New Jerusalem prevailed in America, Edwards also had been reluctant to surrender his more ambitious plans and hopes for America. In his younger years, “The Northampton pastor was ‘dazzled’ by ‘the vision of a redeemer nation,’ and subscribed to the ‘quintessentially

⁵ In response to some historians who deny the validity of the declension, John Erwin wrote the following: “Recent scholarship has criticized the declension theory upon the grounds that it is not historically accurate as an evaluation of the second generation’s religious life in America. One writer has called it ‘the illusion of decline.’ But Cotton Mather did not have the advantage of retrospect upon his father’s generation, and he perceived that it was not as moral or as pious as the first generation” (Erwin, 60).

⁶ Jonathan Edwards, *Thoughts on the revival of religion in New England, 1740* (New York: American Tract Society, 18--?), 10, in L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

⁷ George Whitefield, as cited in Elizabeth Deering Hanscom, *The Heart of the Puritan* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), 24. Whitefield made notes of his American tour that were published in several American and English newspapers of the time.

⁸ Erwin, 60-61, brackets added.

⁹ Erwin, 58.

Puritan notion of a *righteous* city set high on a hill for all the world to see.”¹⁰ Gerald McDermot wrote that Edwards’ belief “that this glorious work of God’s spirit would be the greatest ever seen explains how he could think that if the Great Awakening was indeed the beginning of this [i.e. the Millennium], then ‘the New Jerusalem in this respect has begun to come down from heaven.’”¹¹ However, this last statement from Edwards illustrates how New Jerusalem was shifting from being an actual geographically delineated city to a more spiritual condition of believers in the present churches scattered throughout America, and even the world.

Abraham Eisenstadt points out two seemingly valid reasons for this shift. He explained, “Two factors above all explain why American historians have in successive ages shifted perspective on the central themes of the nation’s past: the transit, over centuries, from a religious view of the world to an increasingly secular one, and the impact of the critical developments of their own time [i.e. the Declaration of Independence, the Revolutionary War, etc.]”¹² Since Eisenstadt acknowledges that the idea of building Zion in the New World was a “central theme of the nation’s past,” it is relevant to briefly examine how these two factors might apply to the subject of Zion and New Jerusalem.

The Enlightenment in America illustrates the pinnacle of a shift “from a religious view of the world to an increasingly secular one.” Jonathan Edwards and others became what were known as “New Light evangelists.” They were a new brand of preachers. Whereas the Puritans of the first generation had relied solely upon the word of God for the support of their

¹⁰ Gerald R. McDermot, *One Holy and Happy Society: The Public Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (University Park: PA, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 16.

¹¹ McDermot, 78, fn. 173.

¹² Abraham S. Eisenstadt, “History and Historians,” in *The Reader’s Companion to American History*, Eric Foner and John A. Garraty, eds. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), [article online]; available from http://www.myhistory.org/historytopics/articles/history_historians.html, Internet.

religious and spiritual views, the preachers of three and four generations later were hearkening back to classical philosophy and even being influenced by the German higher critics of the Bible. In America, they were probably less enthusiastic about throwing out the supernatural in the Bible, but they were becoming more comfortable with naturalistic and humanistic explanations of biblical events and of their own past. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and others were the “Philosophes”¹³ of eighteenth-century America.

The Enlightenment affected all aspects of American life—including the subject of New Jerusalem. While Increase Mather was incorrigibly, if later despairingly, pre-millennialist and Richard Baxter was more postmillennialist, “Both [of their] interpretations [of New Jerusalem] replaced the medieval, Augustinian view of history in which the meek would inherit a heavenly city with a millenarian expectation of an earthly world of joy.”¹⁴ However, Carl Becker attempted “to show that the *Philosophes* demolished the Heavenly City of St. Augustine only to rebuild it with more up-to-date materials.”¹⁵ During this Age of Reason, “the Heavenly City thus shifted to earthly foundations, and the business of justification transferred from divine to human hands.”¹⁶ This is *not* to imply that this meant the establishment of an actual theocratic political kingdom, like that dreamed of by the Puritans. Rather it means that New Jerusalem and Zion had been “humanized.” The philosophers used and interpreted the images of Zion and New Jerusalem in the Bible, if they used them at all, to represent the coming new government of man created by the enlightened

¹³ This is the correct spelling of the term used by Carl Becker and others in referring to the eighteenth-century philosophers. The original *Philisophes* were the myriad of enlightened French philosophers and proponents of new ideas.

¹⁴ Hall, 279.

¹⁵ Carl L. Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), 31.

¹⁶ Becker, 49.

man, who had recently been unfettered from the bonds of traditional Calvinism and could now realize his full, inherent godlike potential.

The new society reenvisioned by the eighteenth-century Enlightenment only resembled the biblical New Jerusalem to the degree that all utopian visions fantasize about the perfect society of perfected humans in a perfect world. The Philosophes altered basic aspects of Christianity to suit their purposes. Those things that the Puritans regarded as spiritual realities about God's dealings with mankind, such as the Creation, the Garden of Eden, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and other supernatural miracles, were used as myths and representations of man's true struggle to master his environment through reason and logic and conquer human vice to allow human virtue to triumph.¹⁷

As already mentioned, nothing escaped the effects of the Enlightenment. Ruth Bloch points out that during the Great Awakening around the middle of the eighteenth century, Jonathan Edwards tried to convert his listeners by revisiting his ideals for America and that the Millennium would probably begin on American soil. However, Bloch adds, "On occasion these visions of American grandeur featured the expansion of civil liberty, but on the whole they were dominated by very worldly images of territorial growth, cultural achievement, rising popularity, and material prosperity."¹⁸ This was a far cry from the holy city of the Bible or of the Puritans where covenants were the rule and God would dwell in person.

The second major factor that shifted attention away from the idea of Zion and New Jerusalem at the pulpits was the idea of American independence and the eventual

¹⁷ See Becker, 128-139. For an example of this kind of Enlightenment thinking, see also Paul Leicester Ford, *The Many-Sided Franklin* (New York: The Century Co., 1915) and James Madison Stifler, *The Religion of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1925).

¹⁸ Ruth H. Bloch, *Visionary republic: Millennial themes in American thought, 1756-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 48.

Revolutionary War. The great men of the 1700s concerned themselves with the morality and legitimacy of rejecting the authority of their motherland. They were more interested in the birth of a more immediate nation than with a seemingly distant Zion.

Preachers and philosophers alike joined in the rhetoric of inalienable rights for man and the proper form and role of divinely sanctioned government. For spiritual and philosophical reasons, both sides were agreed that the monarchy of Great Britain had lost its legitimacy and the Americans needed a new form of government that better suited their needs, desires, and visions for their future.

An entire volume of 211 pages entitled *Political Writings of John Wesley* evidences that even a preacher renowned in American religious history for his devotion to the spiritual welfare of his congregations, his sincere faith, and rousing exhortations to worship God, could not resist the contemporary movements of his political culture. Ruth Bloch explains how preachers such as William Smith, Thomas Barnhard, Jonathan Mayhew, Ezra Stiles, and Eli Forbes revitalized the American dream in a way that effectively laid the foundation for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sentiments that led to Manifest Destiny.¹⁹ The paths of Christian discipleship and American patriotism had converged.²⁰

A good example of the inextricable intertwining of Christian faith with faith in America was New Jersey Presbyterian minister David Austin. Austin's eschatology was published in *The Millennium* in 1794, wherein he expounded his belief that the newly established Washington, D.C., was the New Jerusalem and George Washington was a type of messiah heralding the second coming of Christian dominance on the earth.²¹ According to his

¹⁹ Bloch, 47-48.

²⁰ See Dan Erickson, *As A Thief in the Night* (Salt Lake City: Signature Book, Inc., 1998), 23-27.

²¹ Bloch, 166.

concept, the victorious Americans were the millennial ambassadors for God bringing a new heaven and a new earth to the rest of the world.

However, for the most part, the millennial role of America was subsumed in the more immediate fight for independence. As Gerald McDermot points out, “Eighteenth-century election sermons show a similar pattern [to those of the jeremiads]. The millennium is either absent or merely a rhetorical flourish.”²² Without an intense anticipation of the millennium, Zion and New Jerusalem quickly take a back seat to more pressing matters.

Thus, the earlier vision of a literal Zion, a shining “city on a hill,” faded in the “new light” of the Enlightenment and the blaze of American glory during the Revolution. Abraham Eisenstadt concluded his essay with this question: “What then are this generation’s historians saying about the major themes that have run through American historical writing [i.e. such as Zion and New Jerusalem]? They have retreated from celebrating America’s Providential role among the nations, its mission as a city on a hill, and the singularity and exceptionalism of its society.”²³ This retreat in mainstream American religion from the country’s formative notions regarding Zion and New Jerusalem began in the eighteenth century and has effectively continued into contemporary history.

Zion in Eighteenth-Century Literature and Hymns

However, while the idea of an American Zion specifically, and Zion in general, had somewhat retreated, it had not disappeared. Just because the fountains at the pulpits flowed in other directions does not mean the usage of the terms Zion and New Jerusalem ceased. Several of the artists of the 1700s continued to employ the term in their expressions of poetry, prose, and sacred music.

²² McDermot, 44.

²³ Eisenstadt, n.p.

Earlier in the century, Edward Taylor still employed the term Zion in his poetry. Though it was not published until over two centuries later, phrases like “This Rock’s the Grape that Zion’s Vineyard bore” evidence that the term was at least being used.²⁴ What Taylor meant by his usage there is much more vague and probably indeterminable. Likely, he did not mean the kind of physical geographical Zion that early Latter-day Saints would endeavor to establish more than a century later.

On the other hand, John Williams’ popular autobiographical piece entitled *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion. A Faithful History of Remarkable Occurrences in the Captivity and the Deliverance of Mr. John Williams, Minister of the Gospel* published in 1707 typified the early eighteenth-century notion that still prevailed among New England faithful Puritans: They were the modern Israel chosen by God to be his Zion in contrast to, and for the purpose of converting if possible, the depraved natives of the heathen world in which they now lived. From a literary standpoint, *The Redeemed Captive* portrayed Zion as a place of safety and peace where God dwells and the righteous are protected and prospered.²⁵

Hymn writers of the general Protestant faith actively and frequently employed the parlance of Zion in their texts. John Newton, who wrote the words for the well-known “Amazing Grace,” also penned these words to “Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken” in 1779:

Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God!
He whose word cannot be broken
Chose thee for his own abode . . .
Round each habitation hov’ring
See the cloud and fire appear
For a glory and a cov’ring,

²⁴ Edward Taylor, “Meditation. Cor. 10.4. And all drunk the same spirituall drinke,” as cited in Paul Lauter, ed., *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1994), 399.

²⁵ An excerpt of Williams’ narrative is found in *Heath*, 444-452.

Showing that the Lord is near . . .
Blest inhabitants of Zion,
Purchased by the Savior's blood;
Jesus, whom their souls rely on,
Makes them kings and priests to God.²⁶

Regardless of whether or not Newton referred to an earthly city or the heavenly city of the exalted believers, early converts to “Mormonism” may have heard this sung in their congregations before they joined the Church. The Saints later published this hymn in their first hymnal. Karen Davidson wrote that the use of the word Zion therein, “originally a poetic name for Jerusalem, takes on a new, prophetic meaning in this hymn, a meaning with which Latter-day Saints can identify. Zion is the ‘city of our God,’ the city of safety, unity, and blessing, under the rulership of the Heavenly King. To sing this hymn is to remind ourselves of our most important hopes and goals.”²⁷

Although it is impossible to tell whether or not the hymn “Behold, the Mountain of the Lord” (first published in 1781), written by a young Scotsman named Michael Bruce, would have made it to the American continent during the eighteenth century, it was certainly written early enough since Bruce died in 1767. Phrases like “Behold, the mountain of the Lord/ In latter days shall rise/ On mountain tops, above the hills” coupled with “The rays that shine from Zion’s hill/ Shall lighten ev’ry land” undoubtedly excited the minds and hearts of religious “seekers” and other early followers of Joseph Smith.²⁸ References to worshipping at God’s shrine, of course, potentially connected the idea of Zion back into the temple theology

²⁶ John Newton, “Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken,” *Hymns*, no. 46.

²⁷ Karen Lynn Davidson, *Our Latter-day Hymns: The Stories and the Messages* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1988), 75.

²⁸ Michael Bruce, “Behold, the Mountain of the Lord,” *Hymns*, no. 54. “Seekers” is the term applied to those who awaited a restoration of the Christian church by means of a divine manifestation, such as Roger Williams and later Alexander Campbell and many others. There was even a society in London called “The London Seekers.” For more information see Dan Vogel, *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, Inc., 1988), 1-16.

spoken of in Chapter One and would have immediately appealed to the temple building Latter-day Saints.

Although William Goode, an Englishman born in Buckinghamshire, wrote “Lo, the Mighty God Appearing,” the words would certainly have appealed to post revolutionary American Christians, especially those enamored with the notion that America was the fulfillment of biblical eschatology,

Lo, the mighty God appearing!
From on high Jehovah speaks!
Eastern lands the summons hearing,
O'er the west his thunder breaks . . .
Zion, all its light unfolding,
God in glory shall display.
Lo! He comes! Nor silence holding;
Fire and clouds prepare his way.²⁹

Those with inklings toward America's role as the “redeemer nation” celebrated the idea of Jehovah, the God of Israel, calling to the rest of the eastern lands of the world from the western world, unfolding the godly light of Zion.

This brief survey of eighteenth-century literature and music illustrates that although the light of Zion may have dimmed considerably by the end of the century, it certainly had not been extinguished. In fact, some were trying to hold up the light of New Jerusalem, the city on the hill, in a literal sense. We shall now turn to a brief examination of some of their endeavors.

Eighteenth-century New Jerusalem Experiments

At best, we could say that the Puritans who colonized the bulk of the English territory in the New World looked upon this land as one of opportunity to form a righteous Christian society that would follow the pattern of the ideal city of God. For most of them, the place

²⁹ William Goode, “Lo, The Mighty God Appearing!” *Hymns*, no. 55.

itself was not of particular significance. Although Cotton Mather dabbled a bit in “sacred geography,” identifying an island somewhere near Armenia as the Garden of Eden, he concluded that New Jerusalem would be established in America only because the rest of the world had defaulted.³⁰ Christianity flourished in America alone, and the rest of the world had become completely corrupted by the influence of the Antichrist (i.e. the Roman Catholic Pope). It was not that God chose the land of America; it simply was all there was left.

Jonathan Edwards held the same sentiment, but with a twist. Early on, Edwards believed “New England . . . was the ‘city on a hill’ that would knit together ‘all of Protestant America’ and then, on behalf of the world, inaugurate the final stage of earthly history.”³¹ Edwards could only see two possible reasons for the end beginning in America. One: “God would start with America only because she was the ‘utmost, meanest, youngest, and weakest part’ of the world, in order ‘to make it plain the work was of him.’”³² Or two: to maintain a sort of religious “aesthetic balance. Since [as Edwards reasoned] ‘the old continent has crucified Christ . . . ‘tis probable that, in some measure to balance these things the most glorious renovation of the world shall originate from the new continent.’”³³ While this may not have rendered America’s eighteenth-century eschatological role “ambiguous,” as McDermot alleges, it certainly rendered it rather inglorious.

However, not everyone followed suit. A few fairly radical believers continued to emphasize that the American continent was to be the site for the *triumphal* New Jerusalem, the *holy* city of Zion. Steve Mizrach has compiled an interesting list of American utopian

³⁰ Erwin, 57, 93.

³¹ McDermot, 38.

³² McDermot, 83.

³³ As cited in McDermot, 84.

social experiments.³⁴ It is noteworthy that many of these were not religiously based at all. Most were social and/or economic experiments by humanists or transcendentalists.

Therefore, I will focus only on four that have connections to New Jerusalem specifically.³⁵

In 1746 John Christopher Hartwick took over the leadership of three Lutheran parishes in New Jersey. However, his abrasive and self-promoting style soon cost him his position. "His greatest determination was to form a utopian community dedicated to the principles of pious living. To this end he made numerous land deals [with the] Mohawk Indians in Otsego County, NY," within 250 miles southeast of where Joseph Smith had his First Vision near Palmyra, New York.³⁶ Hartwick's desire was to establish "a regular Town, close built & to be called New Jerusalem."³⁷ Originally purchasing 21,500 acres from the Mohawks in 1754, he planned a system of sacred, seminary-centered communities. When the first plot of land had been filled up he planned to purchase another adjoining or nearby tract and build another New Jerusalem and so forth.

His plan failed miserably due to his lack of charisma and people skills. He persistently and desperately "sought potential settlers and parishioners among the German mercenaries in the British service who had been captured by the Americans." In December 1777, Hartwick "boarded a prison ship in Boston harbor to preach to some Germans recently

³⁴ Steve Mizrach, "The Symbolic Invention of America-as-Utopia" [document online] available from <http://www.fiu.edu/~mizrachs/utopo-amer.html>, Internet. There is a similar list for utopian experiments in Great Britain entitled "Utopian Britannica: British Utopian Experiments 1325-1945" [document online] available from <http://www.utopia-britannica.org.uk/pages/LANCS.htm>, Internet.

³⁵ While some religious groups like the Amish and the Mennonites had their roots in New Jerusalem ideals, they had largely shed those concepts by the time they migrated to America. For more information on the declaration of Muenster, Germany, as the New Jerusalem and the Anabaptist practice of polygamy and communal living, see Rev. Prof. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee, "The Repudiation of Anabaptism by the Dutch Ex-Anabaptist Leader Obbe Philips" [document online], available from <http://www.dr-fnlee.org/obbephil.html>, Internet; and J.B. Yoder, "Mennonites" [document online] available from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/alabaster/A703342>, Internet.

³⁶ Shelley Burtner Wallace, "John Christopher Hartwick: Orthodoxy and Pietism" [document online], available from http://www.hartwick.edu/library/archives/pap_orth.html, Internet.

³⁷ Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town* (New York: Alfred E. Knopf, Inc., 1995), 40.

taken prisoner . . . Together they would ‘establish a village’ where Hartwick ‘would be their preacher.’ But his captive audience preferred remaining on their prison ship to enlisting in his New Jerusalem.”³⁸ A man who cannot persuade a person out of his prison cell certainly cannot lead him to Zion.

Only a couple of years after Hartwick’s failed jail-break revival, Hermon Husband claimed that God had granted him a vision of the location for the New Jerusalem in western Pennsylvania, again probably within 250-300 miles southwest of Palmyra, New York. Husband, a New Light Evangelical and Antifederalist, claimed that he stood upon the eastern corner of the New Jerusalem and saw in vision “the Sea of Glass, the Situation of the Throne; which Sea was as clear as crystal Glass . . . I also saw the Trees of Life, yielding their monthly Fruit; and the Leaves of the Trees healing the Nations; one of which leaves I got hold of, and felt its healing Virtue to remove the Curse and Calamities of Mankind in this World.”³⁹ Any plans or actions Husband may have taken on this vision were so minimal they have vanished into obscurity.

Less than a decade after Husband’s purported vision, Jemima Wilkinson (who later renamed herself “Public Universal Friend,” a spin-off of her Quaker upbringing) claimed revelatory experiences that authorized her to establish the New Jerusalem in Yates county, New York, this time within fifty miles of Palmyra. Having won converts throughout Rhode Island and Connecticut, she established a community of about 150-250 believers that

³⁸ Taylor, 44.

³⁹ As cited in Randall Balmer, “‘Thy Kingdom Come:’ Apocalypticism in American Culture” [document online], available from http://www.preteristarchive.com/dEmEnTiA/press_balmer-randall.html, Internet.

dissipated quickly after her death in 1819, the year before Joseph Smith's experience in the Sacred Grove.⁴⁰

The last New Jerusalem group is particularly interesting because of its well-known association with Latter-day Saint history. In March 1831, Joseph Smith received a divine communication for Leman Copley, who, prior to his conversion to "Mormonism," had belonged to the United Society for Believers in Christ's Second Coming, also known as the Shakers. Begun by James and Jane Wardley in England, the Shakers found their charismatic, messianic figure in Ann Lee. Fleeing persecution and imprisonment, the group fled to America and settled in eastern New York, just a few hundred yards west of the Massachusetts border—and, once again, within 250 miles of Palmyra. The Shaker settlement of Mount (or New) Lebanon, established in 1787, flourished along with about 20 other communities for almost 200 years. One of these communities was even named Zion.

Believing that Ann Lee was the potential embodiment of the female Messiah, the Shakers denied a chiliastic millennium. For them, spiritual rebirth was the only necessary entrance into the millennial condition of peace. However, their spiritual awakening still required a physical holy home. Robert Hughes connected Shakerism to the New Jerusalem, when he explained that their celibacy meant that their only growth could occur by winning converts.⁴¹ Karen Campbell explained that these communities where the faithful would be gathered were literally "'Zions' of God . . . 'cities on a hill,' hewed out in the wilderness . . . for Believers, the New Jerusalem *inhabited as villages without walls* in which Mother-Father

⁴⁰ For more information on Jemima Wilkinson, see J.F.C. Harrison, *The second coming: popular millenarianism, 1780-1850* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1979), 203-204; and "Women in American History," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [document online], available from http://search.eb.com/women/articles/Wilkinson_Jemima.html, Internet.

⁴¹ Robert Hughes, "American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America" [document online], available from <http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/h/hughes-visions.html>, Internet.

God dwells with Her/His people.” In these communities, Shakers were required to abide by the highest standards of Christian conduct and they even practiced a pattern of communal ownership modeled after Acts 4-6, commonly called the United Order by the Latter-day Saints.

Furthermore, unlike the ideas some of the more mainstream contemporary preachers had regarding the American continent, the location of these villages for the Shakers was critical. Although this is beyond the chronology of this chapter, it is important to note the Shakers claimed that in 1843 Adam and Eve visited New Lebanon and delivered a map of the Holy City of God, which was directly above their community. This validated the Shaker community as the Holy City of God on earth and the belief that those who died would be immediately translated into the heavenly city above. For the Shakers, their earthly Zion was a staging area for the heavenly, holy city of God above.⁴²

These four New Jerusalem experiments from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are of interest because of their direct connection to the idea of Zion/New Jerusalem and their close geographical proximity to the beginnings of “Mormonism.” Such movements did not take the new United States of America by storm. But they do illustrate that while the national ideological river of New Jerusalem may have slowed and become narrow and shallow, a major tributary of that once mighty river ran through the neighborhood of Joseph Smith and other early converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Conclusions about Zion/New Jerusalem in Eighteenth-Century New England

This chapter began with the question: What happened to the vision and idea of Zion and New Jerusalem in eighteenth-century America? Several conclusions may be drawn from

⁴² Karen Campbell, “The Plan of a Shaker Village” [document online], available from http://www.shakerwssg.org/plan_of_a_shaker_village.htm, Internet.

this chapter regarding what happened to the concept, particularly in light of an early Latter-day Saint interpretation of Zion and New Jerusalem.

First of all, as Eisenstadt pointed out, Zion became spiritualized, politicized, and “enlighten-ized.” For many, New Jerusalem settled permanently into the heavens as a postmortal civilization, if it existed at all. For the deists, the humanists, the transcendentalists, and so forth, Zion/New Jerusalem was reduced to a myth or a metaphor for the hopeful, optimistic, un-Calvinized perfectibility of man. In the still religious-political preaching of the day, it became a mere “rhetorical flourish,” without real substance or location in real time and space. For most American Christians, it came to signify the Church, in general, regardless of location. However, for them it still represented a pure, holy, righteous Church free from the corruption of the world or Catholicism. While this view does not correspond completely with the early Latter-day Saint view of a literal New Jerusalem to be built in Jackson County, Missouri, those who still sought for a pure church may have been susceptible to the Church’s early missionaries and their message of a Restoration.

For nearly all five million Americans living in the newborn United States by 1800, the vision of Zion and the fulfillment of the hopes and dreams of the Puritan colonists had faded into obscurity. The political, philosophical, economic, social, cultural, governmental, and spiritual struggle and victory of the American Revolution towered above and cast a long shadow over the ‘city on the hill.’ The Church which was organized to “bring forth and establish the cause of Zion” (D&C 6:6) would have to reintroduce some of its converts to the concept of Zion and educate a people who largely had not known the heritage their fathers sought to leave them.

Regarding the New Jerusalem experiments, there are two possible results that would require further research and study to substantiate. The first possibility is that these experiments, though they failed, caused a “New Jerusalem frenzy” in New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Ohio, and elsewhere where the Church gained many of its early converts. Dan Vogel’s *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism* may support this conclusion to some degree.⁴³

On the other hand, the failure and fanaticism of these groups may have caused the opposite effect. For some New Englanders, the blitz of New Jerusalems may have caused the whole idea to become somewhat passe by the nineteenth century. Perhaps this is what Fayette, New York, Reverend Diedrich Willer was referring to in part when in 1833 he wrote, “The greatest imposter of our times in the field of religion is no doubt a certain Joseph Smith . . . This new sect should not cause the Christian Church great astonishment. The past centuries have also had religious shoot-offs [but] they have all been absorbed in the Sea of the Past and marked with the stamp of oblivion. This will also be the lot of the Mormonites.”⁴⁴ It would be valuable for faithful scholars to do further research into primary sources such as newspapers, diaries, correspondence, etc. to discover what the effect of all of this may have been on people’s attitudes toward New Jerusalem at the dawn of the nineteenth century and beyond. Since England was also fertile ground for New Jerusalem experiments and early Latter-day Saint converts, a similar study in that area of Church history would be pertinent as well.⁴⁵

⁴³ See especially chapter eight of this book entitled “The New Jerusalem.”

⁴⁴ From “Church Book of the Reformed Church of Christ in Fayette Township, Seneca County in the State of New York, 1833,” cited in Liz Lemon Swindle and Susan Easton Black, *Joseph Smith: Impressions of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1998), 36.

⁴⁵ Emanuel Swedenborg, Richard Brothers, and John Wroe are just a few of the would-be New Jerusalem builders back in England. See also footnote 34.

More than likely, the effect was mixed. Some people may have been inspired and excited by all the talk of New Jerusalem being established and continued to hold out hope and believe in the biblical prophecies despite the failures of men around them. Others may have eventually grown weary of the seemingly impossible task. Still others may have looked upon anyone claiming to establish New Jerusalem as fanatical and not worthy of their attention.

In some respects, it would seem that the seventeenth century might have provided a more conducive environment for restoring information about Zion and New Jerusalem than the “enlighten-ized” early nineteenth century. In that earlier era there was an enthusiasm for the subject then that was fresh, ambitious, and faithful. It would be interesting to know what Roger Williams or Increase Mather would have done with the benefit of the Book of Mormon and the revelations of Joseph Smith from the Book of Moses and the Doctrine and Covenants. However, all things have been done in the wisdom of the Lord. The next chapter will focus on the decades just prior to Joseph Smith’s revelations on the establishment of Zion to examine what his contemporaries taught on the subject.

Chapter Four—A Primitive, Restored Zion

“The foundations of America are spiritual,” asserted Ezra Taft Benson, thirteenth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and an active voice in twentieth-century American politics.¹ Chapters Two and Three examined the spiritual roots of America in regards to Zion and New Jerusalem. Did this zeal for Zion and New Jerusalem continue into the nineteenth century when a young America was exploring its national identity? For many twenty-first century Americans indoctrinated with the clear and distinct separation of church and state, the close relationship between religion and politics may seem a frightening concept. However, Americans through the early part of the twentieth century had no qualms with biblical allusions and direct quotations in political speeches and other national activities. This chapter will explore how American religious trends from 1800 through the 1830s led to myriad Zion/New Jerusalem experiments and how those experiences might have related to the environment from which the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sprang.

Nineteenth-century American religious trends relative to Zion

The Bible remained so prominent in the nineteenth century that American religious culture cultivated its own brand of Luther’s concept of *sola scriptura* (“scripture only”). Biblical historian Philip Barlow demonstrated how the Reformation belief in *sola scriptura* took an interesting turn during the First Great Awakening in America. Several noted Protestant evangelical leaders, such as Elias Smith, William Miller, Charles Finney, and Thomas Campbell all rejected biblical commentaries and scholarly opinions to study the

¹ From “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation,” Provo Utah Freedom Festival, June 29, 1986, as cited in Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 569.

Bible only and sought their own inspiration. Barlow proposed that “scripture served as a social equalizer” in the nineteenth century.²

As already discussed in Chapter Two, a major biblical subject that continued to have vast influence in the nineteenth century was millennialism. “We find it difficult today to grasp the extent to which millennial visions dominated nineteenth century America,” suggested Donald Dayton, “our lives, at least for most of us, are no longer controlled by the religious currents that once cultivated bewildering variations on the millennial theme. But nineteenth century America was different.”³ The main difference is found in the widespread influence of the Bible that persisted well into the nineteenth century, shifting from an Old Testament to New Testament emphasis around 1820.⁴ However, the Bible’s pervasiveness in American thought was not the only difference; how they viewed the Bible made the real impact, especially in relation to the rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

One major factor on how American religionists read the Bible in the nineteenth century was the rise of *primitivism*. Primitivism is the quest for the early Christian Church as set forth in the New Testament. An Episcopal Evangelical in the nineteenth century proclaimed, “our movement is ‘New Testament Christianity.’”⁵ Richard Hughes explained one fundamental issue of primitivism: “Among those people at least in the nineteenth century, nothing specifically religious was undertaken without first asking for an apostolic command, example, or at the very least, a necessary inference.”⁶ Sometimes this quest for

² See Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1991), 7-8.

³ Donald W. Dayton, “Millennial Views and Social Reform in Nineteenth Century America,” in M. Darrol Bryant and Donald W. Dayton, eds., *The Coming Kingdom: Essays in American Millennialism and Eschatology* (New York: International Religious Foundation, Inc., 1983), 131.

⁴ Barlow, 5-6.

⁵ Richard T. Hughes, *The American Quest for the Primitive Church* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 5.

⁶ Hughes, 6.

authority led to reformations within the American Protestant religions. However, on the western frontier of America, it meant a break with established religions such as was common among the well-known American “Seekers.”⁷ Nineteenth-century seekerism often led to a resurgence of seventeenth-century separatism, such as that manifested by Joseph Bimeler and his community at Zoar (which will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter). In one of their twelve articles of belief, they declared, “We separate ourselves from all ecclesiastical connections and constitutions, because true Christian life requires no sectarianism, while set forms and ceremonies cause sectarian divisions.”⁸

This inclination toward the primitive apostolic Church frequently resulted in *restorationism*. Many of the “seekers” and other reformers interested in recovering the purity and simplicity of the Pentecostal Church—not the modern denomination, but the mode of apostolic worship associated with the advent of the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2)—concluded that the original Church had been lost and God would have to begin a new dispensation by divine manifestation. Joseph Smith’s paternal and maternal ancestries were seekers of this kind.⁹ David Edwin Harrell argued that the restoration sentiment “may be the most vital single assumption underlying the development of American Protestantism.”¹⁰ Dan Vogel explains that the chief issue for most restorationist seekers, as with most primitivists, was the need for authority.¹¹ But a constituted divinely sanctioned clergy was not the only interest of primitivist restorationists. They also sought for

⁷ For a more thorough discussion of Seekers and Seekerism, see Dan Vogel, *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, Inc., 1988) and Alan Taylor, “The free seekers: religious culture in upstate New York, 1790-1835,” in *Journal of Mormon History*, vol. 27, no. 1, Spring 2001, 42-66.

⁸ William A. Hinds, *American Communities*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1902), 105.

⁹ See Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and The Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 9-42; and Vogel, 25-41.

¹⁰ As cited in Hughes, 7.

¹¹ Vogel, 11-29, 97-101.

the return of miracles, direct revelation, spiritual gifts, and, of course, Zion. Though Puritanism as a distinct religious movement had long since died away, one of the lingering legacies of Roger Williams was his desire for “the restoration of Zion.”¹²

Richard Hughes describes the quest to “recover a strong and perfect past and launch the millennial age” as the American dream.¹³ Carey Gifford refers to the desire for religious and social perfection as “the Adamic myth” wherein “America begins a new point in history, [and] evokes a sense of possibility, promise, and adventure.”¹⁴ “In the nostalgic perspective,” argues Gifford, “history was viewed on a cyclical, rather than on a horizontal continuum. The Adamic past and the utopian future were then paradoxically the same points on the circle of history . . . Those who looked to the past [the restorationists] looked for the recreation of a utopian society [i.e. Zion/New Jerusalem] that would produce the millennium.”¹⁵ This means that the concept of Zion, for those who believed that Zion was part of what needed to be restored, influenced not just their religious priorities and ambitions, but their political, social, cultural, and economic visions as well.

Thomas McGowan proposed, “Perhaps the most obvious characteristic of the American dream is the effort to create and build the perfect world. The long line of American chiliastic seekers . . . gives evidence to this hope and to the religious significance attributed to it. Utopian communitarians have almost always claimed to be forming some kind of

¹² As cited in C. Leonard Allen, “Roger Williams and ‘the Restoration of Zion,’” in Richard T. Hughes, ed., *The American Quest for the Primitive Church* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 33-34, 46-47.

¹³ Hughes, 13.

¹⁴ Carey Gifford, “Space and Time as Themes in Alexander Campbell,” in M. Darrol Bryant and Donald W. Dayton, eds., *The Coming Kingdom: Essays in American Millennialism and Eschatology* (New York: International Religious Foundation, Inc., 1983), 112.

¹⁵ Gifford, 114.

'kingdom of God,' 'city on a hill,' or 'new Zion.'"¹⁶ He further explained, "American utopian communities formed around these myths have usually had at least one thing in common: the determination within the religious tradition of the Puritan founders to build the kingdom of God here on earth."¹⁷ In the last chapter, I suggested that one of the results of the numerous Zion/New Jerusalem attempts might have been a dampening of the enthusiasm for such causes. Without question, some enthusiasts maintained the hope and desire for the realization of Zion in America despite past failures.

This is not to suggest, however, that all utopian attempts in the nineteenth century were religiously oriented and that their founders were interested in the establishment of Zion. They most certainly were not. There were many American utopian communities initiated in the early 1800's whose founders were no more interested in the Holy Bible than they were in the Muslim Qur'an. Numerous non-religious socialist and communist utopias founded by humanist and transcendentalist philosophers and reformers believed they could show the world the most suitable form of civilization without the aid of faith or scripture.¹⁸ Because of their counter-culture tendencies, these communities certainly would have had a negative impact on Latter-day Saint attempts to establish New Jerusalem. These communities threatened the American way of capitalism and private ownership of property and often encountered estrangement and hostility from their neighbors.

¹⁶ Thomas McGowan, "Mormon Millennialism," in M. Darrol Bryant and Donald W. Dayton, eds., *The Coming Kingdom: Essays in American Millennialism and Eschatology* (New York: International Religious Foundation, Inc., 1983), 149.

¹⁷ McGowan, 149-150.

¹⁸ For more information on many of these communities, see the following websites: "Utopian Societies: The Amana Colonies" [document online], available from <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/amana/utopia.htm>, Internet; and "Utopia Britannica" [document online] available from <http://www.utopia-britannica.org.uk/pages/INTERNAT.htm>, Internet. Probably the greatest American socialist utopian builder in the 1820's was Robert Owen. For more information on his communities, see "Robert Owen" [document online], available from <http://www.marxists.org/reference/bio/owen.htm>, Internet; and John Humphrey Noyes, *Strange Cults and Utopias of 19th-Century America* (Formerly titled: *History of American Socialism*), Mark Holloway, ed. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1966), 15-18.

To further keep this perspective in context, it should be noted that despite all the premillennialist views in American in regards to the establishment of Zion/New Jerusalem, postmillennialism was still the prevalent and preferred view regarding the coming kingdom of God. While most American Christians believed in a literal Second Coming and a literal Millennium, “implicit in such an understanding was the expectation that this millennium would be ushered in through existing Christian agencies in continuity with human effort.”¹⁹ Most nineteenth-century postmillennialists, like Charles G. Finney and Alexander Campbell, believed that New Jerusalem was an event to come at the end of the thousand-year reign of the Spirit and Christian rule of faith on the earth. It would be brought about by revival, reform, and a victorious, though gradual, spiritual rebirth of America and the rest of the world.²⁰

In the postmillennialist view, there could be no Zion or New Jerusalem until the faithful had been prepared for 1,000 years to receive it.²¹ Most of the mainstream established religions in the adolescent United States—Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, etc.—had become generally silent on the subject of Zion or New Jerusalem. And when they did employ the terms, New Jerusalem generally referred either to the crowning civilization to come on the earth with the return of Christ or the more Augustinian view of the heavenly destination

¹⁹ Dayton, 132. For more on the prevailing postmillennial sentiment of the nineteenth century, see also Dan Erickson, *As A Thief in the Night* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, Inc., 1998), 13-23.

²⁰ Many, such as John L. Brooke in *The Refiner's Fire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) have asserted Charles Finney's influence on Joseph Smith, but Rev. Finney said very little about Zion or New Jerusalem that could be related to Joseph Smith's revelations on the subject. Alexander Campbell, the mentor of Sidney Rigdon, no doubt had an influence on many early converts to “Mormonism,” but he also taught little, if anything, about Zion or New Jerusalem. For an extensive list of his writings, see “Alexander Campbell Page” [document online], available from <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/people/acampbell.html>, Internet. He, of course, broke with Rigdon when Rigdon proposed his own utopian experiment called ‘the family’ in Mentor, Ohio. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that Campbell was opposed to such premillennialist tendencies.

²¹ See Dayton, 135-136.

for the saved.²² Zion referred simply to the Church of God, and denominations seldom, if ever, took issue with the fact that other churches employed the term to refer to their particular sect. It was a biblical metaphorical term that all believers felt they had a right to.²³

Hence, many of the utopian communities who utilized the terms Zion and New Jerusalem did not claim sole right to their usage. Others who founded religiously exclusive gathering communities similar to the Latter-day Saint New Jerusalem in Missouri may not have used the terms simply because they had lost their distinctiveness in the larger social and religious context. The loss of explicit and exclusive meanings for Zion and New Jerusalem legitimizes our inclusion of such utopian biblically-based communities in this study based on their fundamental similarity to the Zion/New Jerusalem described by Joseph Smith and/or their occurrence within the same general historical period as the beginnings of “Mormonism,” whether or not they used the nomenclature of Zion or New Jerusalem.

As detailed in Chapter Two, postmillennialism and premillennialism are not always homogenous within nor easily applied to religious groups, especially radically dissenting religious groups. In other words, not everyone played by twentieth century rules that would be convenient—but oversimplified—for historians to apply in millennial studies. For example, the Shakers believed that the Second Coming had already happened and the Millennium had already begun. Ann Lee was the manifestation of the female part of the

²² For example, see “A Singular Dream,” in *The Christian Advocate* (New York: Methodist Episcopal Church), vol. 1, no. 1, September 9, 1826, *Archive of Restoration Culture*, prepared by Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of History, Brigham Young University, [CD-ROM]. Hereafter cited as *Archive of Restoration Culture*, [CD-ROM].

²³ For example, the Society for Giving and Receiving Religious Intelligence published the *Zion's Herald* newspaper beginning on January 9, 1823. When the Boston Wesleyan Association purchased the paper in 1831, it saw no need to change the name (see “The New Zion’s Herald, A Brief History” [document online], available from <http://zionsherald.org/history.html>, Internet). When the African Methodist Episcopal church, established in 1796, added the term ‘Zion’ to their name in 1848, they simply stated that this was “The term most frequently used in the Bible to describe the church of God” (see “The A.M.E. Zion Church: History” [document online], available from <http://www.theamezionchurch.org/history.html>, Internet).

Messiah. Their New Jerusalem was the gradual founding of Shaker communities that were gathering to await the final harvest of the righteous and the burning of the wicked. In context of the rest of America they might be considered rather premillennial in their radical attempts to retreat from Babylon and gather to their respective Zions, but their eschatology is clearly postmillennial.

Another difficult figure to classify is Emanuel Swedenborg, who proclaimed new revelations constituting the descent of New Jerusalem from heaven. Swedenborg's followers established the New Jerusalem Church with planned communities such as the one in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. Their New Jerusalem was the purification of human civilization that would come with gradual acceptance of Swedenborg's enlightened revelations leading to ultimate peace and righteousness on the earth.²⁴ Since Swedenborgians believed the millennium had already commenced, it is difficult to classify them as premillennialists.²⁵ But their restorationist tendencies partitioned them off from the rest of postmillennialist America.

But premillennial Americans convinced of their religious principles of primitivism, restorationism, and/or seekerism in the early nineteenth century were "a people bent on creating the kingdom of God in their own time and space."²⁶ In an examination of these attempts, we will see factors that would prove both detrimental and beneficial to the Latter-day Saint establishment of Zion in Jackson County, Missouri, in 1831.

²⁴ See Hannah Adams, *A Dictionary of all Religions and Religious Denominations, Jewish, Heathen, Mahometan, and Christian, Ancient and Modern* (Boston: Cummings and Hilliard, 1817), 202-206; and Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Heavenly City, a spiritual guidebook*, translated by Lee Woofenden (West Chester, PA: The Swedenborg Foundation, 1993).

²⁵ There is evidence to suggest that Joseph Smith and other early Latter-day Saints had heard of the Swedenborgians. (See O. Dogberry, "Swedenborgians," in *The Reflector* (Palmyra, NY: O. Dogberry), March 16, 1830, *Archive of Restoration Culture*, [CD-ROM].) However, there is little to suggest that they had significant contact with them until the middle of the nineteenth century.

²⁶ McGowan, 151.

A New Zion in a New Wilderness

As the United States began to expand further into the wilderness of North America, settlers pushing westward saw each new frontier as a new opportunity with new possibilities. In this way, the Puritan zeal for colonizing the New World reemerged as the borders of the “promised land” expanded further into the continent. Each wave of Americans could see themselves as “first generation colonists” who had the hope of “laying some good foundation . . . though they should be stepping stones unto others, for the performing of so great a work.”²⁷

For many millennial believers, “America’s mission was not self-imposed, but a God-given duty. God had, indeed, given to the nation an awful charge, not only to America, but in behalf of the world as well. The millennium was now arriving *within* history. Now American secular utopianism found its place alongside religious millennialism.”²⁸ New Jerusalem, or at least the foundations of the holy city, seemed to be a real possibility to many. Today details about some of these experiments are more available than are details for some of the other attempts to build New Jerusalem. Beginning with the examples with the least available information and progressing to the ones with the most available details, these Zion/New Jerusalem experiments increase understanding of the religious fervor with which settlers approached their new wilderness.

Some of these movements do not make specific reference in their religious communal experiment to New Jerusalem. For example, Samuel Snowberger founded a group near Snowhill, Pennsylvania, about twenty miles from Harrisburg in 1820, the same year that

²⁷ William Bradford, as cited in Edward Arber, ed., *The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers, 1606-1623 A.D.; as told by Themselves, their Friends, and their Enemies* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, & Co., 1897), 266-267.

²⁸ Gifford, 124.

Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son in upstate New York. Snowberger was actually a lingering believer from the Ephrata community established in 1732, which ended around 1780. While neither the Ephrata group nor Snowberger ever claimed directly to be establishing *the* New Jerusalem, they frequently referred to themselves as God's elect people who had gathered together for safety in a holy city preparatory to the imminent burning of the wicked.²⁹

However, others more boldly stated their intentions in promoting their beliefs and cultivating a following. Not too far from where the Latter-day Saints would begin to gather in Ohio during 1831, a man named Joseph C. Dylkes appeared in an 1828 camp meeting and soon proclaimed that he was the returning Messiah, who had come to establish the kingdom of God on earth. He caused quite a controversy and persuaded a handful of believers to follow him to Philadelphia where they would establish the New Jerusalem. However, his followers lost track of him in the journey and he was never heard from again. Also known as "the Leatherwood God," Dylkes illustrated how the zeal for New Jerusalem attracted typical nineteenth-century Americans.³⁰

Another example of the interest of New Jerusalem believers near Joseph Smith's residence is the report in the October 9, 1829, *Wayne Sentinel* (of Palmyra, New York) of a Mr. McDonald in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Mr. McDonald "had founded a city, which he

²⁹ See Noyes, 136. For more information on the Ephrata settlement, see "Utopian Societies: The Amana Colonies" [document online], available from <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/amana/utopia.htm>, Internet; "The Symbolic Invention of America as Utopia" [document online], available from <http://www.fiu.edu/~mizrachs/utopo-amer.html>, Internet; and Peter C. Erb, "Eschatology at Ephrata," in M. Darrol Bryant and Donald W. Dayton, eds., *The Coming Kingdom: Essays in American Millennialism and Eschatology* (Barrytown, NY: International Religious Foundation, Inc., 1983).

³⁰ See "The Leatherwood God" [document online], available from <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~virginiawesttooregon/page7.html>, Internet. There is a possibility that Joseph Smith had heard something of Dylkes. In a revelation directed to the Shakers in Ohio, Joseph Smith wrote, "the Son of Man [i.e. Christ] cometh not in the form of a woman, neither of a man traveling on the earth" (D&C 49:22). The reference to a woman is obviously to Ann Lee. Dylkes fits the description of "a man traveling on the earth" claiming to be the Messiah and he is in the right area at the right time.

called New Jerusalem.”³¹ This report came after the Book of Mormon manuscript had been completed and a copy for the printer was being made and delivered to E.B. Grandin for publication. There is nothing else at present to corroborate this report, but the New Jerusalem was definitely a newsworthy subject around the time of the Restoration.

We know significantly more about some other utopian experiments that had more direct connections to the ideas of Zion and New Jerusalem. Born in Germany in 1770, Johann George Rapp gathered a group of primitivist believers who were anxious to reinstitute the apostolic Church, including the communal living alluded to in Acts 5-6. Due to persecution, Rapp and his followers fled to the United States in 1803 and settled on about 5,000 acres in Harmony, Butler County, in western Pennsylvania (not to be confused with Harmony, *Susquehanna* County, in northeastern Pennsylvania where Joseph Smith translated a portion of the Book of Mormon). Rapp and his followers formed three communities in all: Harmony, Pennsylvania (1803-1814); New Harmony, Indiana (1815-1824); and Economy, Pennsylvania (1825-1904).³² Each of these settlements was populated by Bible-believing Christians who committed all their worldly goods to the community by covenant and endeavored to live highly moral lives, eventually accepting celibacy as part of their faith.

Although George Rapp’s teachings are not easily available, he wrote such things to his adopted son Frederick as, “Every day I become more and more convinced of the great destination of the plan of the Kingdom of God in our point of time . . . God is with us.” In 1810, he wrote, “Some men and women wept as I spoke of the great destination of

³¹ As cited in Vogel, 193.

³² See “Virtual American Biographies, George Rapp,” in *Appleton’s Encyclopedia* [document online], available from <http://www.famousamericans.net/georgerapp/>, Internet; and Noyes, 135.

Harmonie.”³³ What was Rapp teaching about the destiny of Harmony that caused such excitement and longing in his hearers? John Duss, one of the last Rappites and the final trustee who supervised the dissolution of the community in the early twentieth century, summarized George Rapp’s vision as follows:

*They believed it was their destiny to set an illustrious example of the harmony of human relations, the natural cooperative economy of the community of goods, and the peaceful reign of Christian fellowship under such conditions; so that other communities observing this marvel of communal life, would gradually be led to adopt a similar policy. In short, they believed that a Heaven on Earth was not only possible but, under conditions of so-called Christian communism, inevitable.”*³⁴

The Harmonists were John Winthrop’s city on a hill (from Chapter Two) revisited. They even planned at one time to build a temple, but the plans fell through for unknown reasons.³⁵

After citing Rev. 3:8-12, which speaks of the New Jerusalem, Karl Arndt proposes, “George Rapp considered his Harmony Society to be this congregation [i.e. the new Jerusalem].”³⁶

Although the Rappites drew the suspicion of their neighbors, they generally escaped persecution, possibly because most outsiders would not have known generally what the community actually believed since George Rapp spoke only German, as did most of his followers. But, in the context of this thesis on the nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint New Jerusalem, there is one other interesting similarity to Joseph Smith’s Zion that anyone could have noticed about Rapp’s communities. A visitor from England described New Harmony, Indiana, as a town “regularly laid out into straight and spacious streets, crossing each other at right angles, with neat and commodious brick and framed houses which are extremely well

³³ As cited in John S. Duss, *The Harmonists, A Personal History* (Ambridge, PA: The Harmonie Association, Inc., 1970), 24.

³⁴ Duss, 44, emphasis in original.

³⁵ Duss, 34.

³⁶ Karl J.R. Arndt, *George Rapp's Harmony Society 1785-1847*, rev. ed. (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1972), 95.

built, the uniform redness of the brick . . . giving to the place a brightness and appearance which the towns of England are quite destitute of.”³⁷ All three of Rapp’s communities were organized after this manner. Although it was not completely revolutionary, such a town plan broke with the traditional organization of rural German communities of Rapp’s upbringing and indicated a rare expansionist perspective in communal planning.³⁸

Rapp’s followers were intent on establishing New Jerusalem. Three hundred of his followers who lost faith that Rapp would be able to get the job done, reclaimed \$150,000.00 of their original investment in the plan and in 1833 followed Bernhard Muller to Phillipsburg (now Monaca), Pennsylvania, to establish the millennial New Jerusalem. This group emigrated to Louisiana and disbanded after the death of Muller and his wife later in the century.³⁹ In 1833 while Joseph Smith and the Saints were founding New Jerusalem in Missouri and being persecuted for it severely, the Rappites were going about the same business in Pennsylvania with little or no opposition from the outside world.

Another interesting nineteenth-century utopian experiment is Joseph Bimeler’s Zoar community established in 1817 in Tuscarawas Valley in Ohio. Bimeler and a group of 200-800 German Separatists did not originally intend to establish a Zion or New Jerusalem, but step-by-step their community’s economic and religious policies eventually led them into that kind of faith-based experiment.

In the choosing of a name, Bimeler and his followers betrayed their millennialist sentiments by calling their community Zoar, the name of the mountain refuge God provided

³⁷ As cited in Paul H. Douglas, “Town Planning for the City of God,” in Gairdner B. Moment and Otto F. Kraushaar, eds., *Utopias: the American Experience* (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1980), 104.

³⁸ For a more detailed discussion of this rectilinear town plan, see Douglas, 104-124.

³⁹ See *The 1911 Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Economy” [document online], available from <http://85.1911encyclopedia.org/E/EC/ECSTASY.htm>, Internet.

for Lot when he escaped from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (see Gen. 19).⁴⁰ In 1819, this group's primitivist beliefs led them to establish "a plan . . . devised to create a community of goods and efforts whereby all individuals' property and future earnings became a common stock" based on the pattern of communal living many nineteenth-century Christians saw in Acts 4:31 through Acts 6. Early in 1819, the citizens of Zoar also passed a resolution establishing themselves as "The Separatists of the Society of Zoar."⁴¹ In their twelve articles of faith, they declared their independence from all other sects and denominations, their withdrawal from Babylon (i.e. the rest of the world), and their acceptance of local governments as necessary to keep the general peace and protect citizens.⁴²

One of their citizens, Simon Beiter, believed that the Zoar system would spread all over the world. He said, "I thought every body would come into communistic relations. I believe so still, but I don't know how far our particular system will prevail. In heaven there is only Communism; and why should it not be our aim to prepare ourselves in this world for the society we are sure to enter there? If we can get rid of our willfulness and selfishness here there is so much done for heaven."⁴³ In 1897, just one year before the society officially disbanded and sold off their excess properties at public auction, Mrs. Wilson G. Smith wrote of their two and a half acre community garden: "The hub, a circular hedge of arbor-vitae, with a spreading Norway Spruce in the center, they call 'the New Jerusalem,' and the spokes are the many paths leading thereunto."⁴⁴ Whether the Zoar residents believed they were the

⁴⁰ It is interesting to note that John Winthrop used the same analogy. See John Winthrop letter, May 15, 1629, as found in *Winthrop Papers* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929-1947), microfiche, 91-92.

⁴¹ See "History of Zoar Village" [document online], available from <http://www.zca.org/history.html>, Internet.

⁴² See Hinds, 105-106.

⁴³ Hinds, 101.

⁴⁴ As cited in Hinds, 95.

hub or one of the spokes, New Jerusalem was at the center of their eschatological community and way of thinking.

William Hinds acknowledged that the nineteenth-century “Separatists, one and all, trace their origin to revivals . . . The New England states especially were pervaded with the most intense religious excitement.”⁴⁵ Although John Humphrey Noyes, the Perfectionist leader and founder of the Putney, Oneida, and Wallingford communities in Connecticut in 1838, later than the dates covered in this thesis, he felt spiritual stirrings from the same revivals that circulated through upstate New York and stirred the religious feeling of young Joseph Smith, Jr.⁴⁶ The fire of these revivals stirred an entire generation to search not only for spiritual regeneration but for the ultimate in Christian faith and living: Zion/New Jerusalem, the earthly kingdom of God.

New Jerusalem and Zion closer to the Latter-day Saints’ early roots

Aside from these general Zion/New Jerusalem experiments in the nineteenth century, there were three other experiments that show how near the Christian utopian ideal of Zion/New Jerusalem was to Joseph Smith and the beginnings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He received his divine call in a society where people were familiar with Zion/New Jerusalem ideas and terminology, and many of the Church’s early converts were seeking for Zion as eagerly as was the young prophet.

Richard Bushman, a Latter-day Saint historian and an authority on the background of Joseph Smith, states that the most fundamental and powerful influence upon Joseph Smith prior to his call as a prophet was his family.⁴⁷ He was schooled and taught by his mother and

⁴⁵ Hinds, 144.

⁴⁶ Hinds, 144-155.

⁴⁷ See Bushman, 3-4.

spent almost all his time with his family trying to make a living. No doubt many Christian principles and biblical ideas were, according to Joseph's own words, "diffused into my soul by my grandfathers while they dandled me on their knees."⁴⁸ In this context, it is interesting to point out that Joseph's uncle, Jason Mack, "was an itinerant preacher and faith healer who became the leader of a communal experiment in the Canadian province of New Brunswick. Shortly after his visit to the Smiths' small Tunbridge farm, sometime before 1804, Jason 'gathered together some thirty families, on a tract of land which he had purchased for the purpose of assisting poor persons to the means of sustaining themselves.'"⁴⁹ One of Jason's descendants reported, "In such labor the greater part of his life was spent."⁵⁰ The Smith family certainly had intimate exposure to ideas related to Zion prior to Joseph's receiving the golden plates or any other revelations on the subject of Zion/New Jerusalem.

Another situation that may have involved members of the Smith and Cowdery families was the Nathaniel Wood venture of 1800 before Joseph Smith, Jr., was even born. In 1789, Nathaniel Wood was excommunicated from the Congregational church in Middleton, Vermont. Their fundamental beliefs were that America was a chosen land and that they were modern Israelites chosen to bring back true religion. In the nineteenth-century common cultural belief of searching for lost treasure, Wood and his followers began using divining rods to look for buried treasure. Sometime around 1800, Wood established a community at Middletown, Connecticut. Their intention in searching for treasure became more focused

⁴⁸ Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols., introduction and notes by B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-1951), 5:498. Hereafter cited as HC.

⁴⁹ Vogel, 28-29.

⁵⁰ See an untitled page located on the website for "Colby Family and Others" [document online], available from <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~colby/colbyfam/d290.html>, Internet. For a rather interesting letter from Jason to his and Lucy's brother Solomon while he was involved in this settlement, see Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (New York: Tullidge and Crandall, 1877), [book online], available from http://www.kingdomofzion.org/doctrines/library/pluralmarr/PM_WofMrmndm.txt, Internet.

according to Ron Walker: they were trying to finance the establishment of the New Jerusalem.⁵¹

Walker and other historians propose that Oliver Cowdery's father, William, had been at least marginally involved with the Wood affair.⁵² While there is some disagreement about the degree to which the Wood circumstance may have affected the rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Richard Bushman points out, "Joseph did not have to learn to use the New Jerusalem language from anyone. It was common parlance among the millenarians."⁵³ This study has shown that Zion terminology was common not only in the nineteenth-century but from the beginning of modern history in the New World to the formation of the United States as an independent nation. The real issue is what people meant when they used the term. As will be shown in the next chapter, Latter-day Saints certainly had some things in common with the other Bible believers of their time and environment, but Joseph Smith introduced some new concepts that no one before the Restoration had suggested.

As we have already mentioned Sidney Rigdon, let us briefly consider some of his and his followers' attitudes and behaviors that prepared them for the Zion and New Jerusalem of the Restored Gospel. Rigdon was a definite seeker with primitivist and restorationist tendencies. Unlike his postmillennialist mentor Alexander Campbell, he believed that the followers of Christ could emulate New Testament Christianity to the best of their ability while awaiting the restoration. Rigdon broke with Campbell in his belief that the order of

⁵¹ Ronald W. Walker, "The Persisting Idea of American Treasure Hunting" *BYU Studies*, vol. 24, no. 4, Fall 1984, 458, fn 127.

⁵² Aside from Walker's article and the sources he cites there, see also "Oliver Cowdery Chronology" [document online], available from <http://olivercowdery.com/history/Cdychrn1.htm>, Internet. This group also suggests that Joseph Smith, Sr., would have been in the area and could have been involved in the Wood affair at least initially, before they moved to Connecticut. Also see Brooke, 57-58.

⁵³ Richard L. Bushman to Ryan S. Gardner, e-mail, received June 6, 2002, in possession of author.

common property from Acts was incumbent upon believers who sought the apostolic Church. Rigdon persuaded a group of Campbell's former followers in Mentor, Ohio, to form "the family," who would pattern their community of believers after this form of social and economic union.⁵⁴ While Rigdon never called his communal "family" New Jerusalem, they certainly practiced principles of social and economic living that indicated their interest in building a godly society. While this experiment had nothing to do with Joseph Smith's initial understanding of the concept as found in the Book of Mormon and other early revelations, the experience of Rigdon and his converts certainly had been discussed as the Prophet sought for revelation on how the affairs of Zion should be conducted in the last days.⁵⁵

Rigdon's desire to establish Zion, which began as a thirty-seven year old Reformed Baptist pastor, did not dissolve though he lost his membership in the Church and left the main body of the Saints. After Joseph Smith's martyrdom in 1844, Rigdon led a group of dissident "Mormon" followers to Antrim, Pennsylvania, and declared that Andrew G. McLanahan's farm was the site for the New Jerusalem. Within two years the group had failed to pay their mortgage and disbanded.⁵⁶

Conclusion

Many, if not all, of those involved in the formation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and those who joined the restored Church were clearly familiar with the terms Zion and New Jerusalem. They had a basic understanding of what those terms may

⁵⁴ See Vogel, 37; *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols., edited by Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1233-35; Michael Marquardt, "Conversion of Sidney Rigdon" [document online], available from <http://www.xmission.com/~research/central/resth1.htm>, Internet; and Robert L. Millet, "The Development of the Concept of Zion in Mormon Theology" (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1983), 87-89.

⁵⁵ Joseph Smith wrote, "The plan of 'common stock,' which had existed in what was called 'the family,' whose members generally had embraced the everlasting Gospel, was readily abandoned for the more perfect law of the Lord." (See HC 1:146-147.)

⁵⁶ See "Antrim Township, Pennsylvania" [document online], available from <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/vshadow2/towns/antrim.html>, Internet.

have meant in the Bible. This familiarity no doubt helped them to accept the revelations and designs of the budding world religion.

Otto F. Kraushaar wrote, “The basic traits of religiously founded utopias in the United States are exemplified by the odyssey of the Mormons.”⁵⁷ Given the pervasiveness of this idea in America prior to the Restoration, it is not unusual that Joseph Smith and others associated with the founding of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would have been interested in the subject. While some have alleged that Joseph Smith was merely a product of his environment, his original contributions to the subject of Zion and New Jerusalem in the next chapter will show that such a generalization is over-simplified and grossly inaccurate.

In fact, Thomas McGowan asserted, “There have been many concrete attempts to bring about this kingdom [of God] . . . But perhaps the best examples of this aspiration for perfection in America has been the Mormons. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, more popularly known as the Mormon church, reflects well the American millennial myths because of its belief that this age and this nation are blessed by a special divine presence.”⁵⁸ The nineteenth-century foundations of the Latter-day Saint beliefs about Zion and New Jerusalem, which have made of the Mormons the “best examples” of Zion-builders in American history, defines the scope of the next chapter.

⁵⁷ Otto F. Kraushaar, “America: Symbol of a Fresh Start,” in Gairdner B. Moment and Otto F. Kraushaar, eds., *Utopias: the American Experience* (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1980), 22.

⁵⁸ McGowan, 151-152.

Chapter Five—The Unfolding of the Latter-day Saint Zion

“Mormonism is indeed a good example of American utopian hopes,” wrote non-Mormon historian Thomas McGowan, “because it is a religion whose goal is nothing less than the establishment of the heavenly society of saints here in America now in our time.”¹ Robert L. Millet, former Dean of Religious Education at Brigham Young University concurred, “the constant element in Mormon theology is and has been the quest for a restored Zion community.”² This began with the first prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Joseph Smith, Jr., who believed, “We ought to have the building up of Zion as our greatest object.”³ In this final chapter, we will explore how Joseph Smith, and consequently the rest of the Latter-day Saints, came to understand the idea of Zion and the establishment of New Jerusalem in the restored Church.

While many aspects of the Mormon concept of Zion bear some resemblance to what had been taught in previous centuries in common biblical Christianity, this new religion with new scripture and new revelation introduced a few unprecedented ideas about Zion and the holy city of New Jerusalem. This examination of the development, not necessarily the origins, of the doctrine through Joseph Smith’s own experiences from his early years to June 1834 explores the relationship between the Prophet and his nineteenth-century religious

¹ Thomas McGowan, “Mormon Millennialism,” in M. Darrol Bryant and Donald W. Dayton, eds., *The Coming Kingdom: Essays in American Millennialism and Eschatology* (New York: International Religious Foundation, Inc., 1983), 167.

² Robert L. Millet, “The Development of the Concept of Zion in Mormon Theology” (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1983), 5.

³ Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols., introduction and notes by B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-1951), 3:390, July 2, 1839. Hereafter cited as HC.

environment as well as how his ideas “exceeded any previous theological formulation of any other religious leader in their scope and clarity.”⁴

Beginnings—The early years to 1823

As the previous chapter has shown, Joseph Smith had likely heard the terms “Zion” and “New Jerusalem” in his early teenage years. He had also been exposed to ideas that were connected with what he would learn later about the establishment of the holy municipality. For example, his uncle Jason Mack’s lifelong experiment in Canada would have at least introduced Joseph to basic ideas about Christian community development. Given current available historical research, it is impossible to ascertain how familiar he was with specific New Jerusalem experiments. However, our earlier examination of such events shows that many early converts to “Mormonism” undoubtedly had at least some knowledge of such concepts. Denying that Joseph had at least heard of such ideas would be to put him in a social and religious vacuum that simply could not have existed in early America.

Indeed, Milton R. Hunter, a Latter-day Saint writer, educator, and General Authority, admitted, “Joseph Smith and his associates . . . were very familiar with the predictions of the holy prophets regarding the Millennium as recorded in the Bible . . . [including the idea] that Zion was to be established . . . In fact, since these ideas were found in the Bible, they were common property of all Christian churches.”⁵ What was not common to all the churches was how, when, where, and among whom the fulfillment of such prophecies was to occur. As this thesis has already illustrated, sharp differences of opinion existed between premillennialists and postmillennialists in nineteenth-century America. It would be interesting to know if some of these millenarian conflicts contributed to young Joseph’s description of his religious

⁴ *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 2nd ed. [Church Educational System manual, 2000], 26.

⁵ Milton R. Hunter, *The Gospel through the Ages* (Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, Inc., 1945), 277-278.

environment: “The teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible” (JS-H 1:12).

Some caution should accompany any acknowledgement that Joseph Smith was aware (if indeed, he was aware) of ideas regarding Zion and New Jerusalem in the years preceding his prophetic claims. We need not subscribe to the stance of Allen Harrod, who asserts that Joseph Smith plagiarized every idea and experience from other sources.⁶ Just because a person is influenced by their environment does not lead to the inescapable conclusion that he is completely programmed by those forces. For Latter-day Saints, who accept the idea that prophets in all ages have received revelation from God, there is no problem with Joseph Smith giving inspired instructions regarding Zion and New Jerusalem in millenarian America. In like fashion, Moses gave necessary laws and commandments to reform the idolatrous and previously enslaved Israelites; Isaiah gave counsel to the besieged Hezekiah; and Nehemiah oversaw the rebuilding of the temple amidst political, social, religious, and militaristic turmoil. Joseph Smith explained, “This is the principle on which the government of heaven is conducted—by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed.”⁷

In general, allegations of religious plagiarism often encounter three primary difficulties. For example, Harrod stated that Joseph Smith borrowed his ideas for New Jerusalem from reading excerpts of the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg in the *Palmyra Reflector*. However, there is no evidence to support such an idea. Did Joseph Smith read the

⁶ Allen Harrod, “Who was Joseph Smith?” [document online], available from <http://www.watchman.org/lds/whoisjosephsmith.htm>, Internet.

⁷ HC 5:135, August 27, 1842.

Reflector? Perhaps he and other members of his family did so from time to time. But there is no indication from him or any contemporary source that he ever read any article on Swedenborg or his teachings. And even if he had, Nechama Sataty, a doctorate student from the University of Pennsylvania, pointed out that contemporary newspapers were generally deficient in defining a group's religious beliefs to their readers.⁸ Lack of substantial evidence for linking the ideas of one person to another can be a real problem in arguments like Harrod's.

Secondly, Harrod asserted, "Anyone familiar with the teachings of the Mormons will quickly recognize ideas of Swedenborg."⁹ When it comes to the idea of New Jerusalem, nothing could be further from the truth. As already acknowledged in this thesis, Swedenborg, Jemima Wilkinson, Ann Lee, George Rapp, and others used the phrases "Zion" or "New Jerusalem." But this does not imply that those terms had homogenous meaning from one group to another. As this chapter will show later, the early Latter-day Saint concept of New Jerusalem was that it would be an actual city to be built by humans and occupying a specific geographical location. For Swedenborg, the New Jerusalem meant a "new church," not unlike reformative mainstream religious definitions of Zion in nineteenth-century America.¹⁰ But this new church meant only a "New Church as to doctrine, and therefore it was seen coming down from God out of heaven."¹¹ Swedenborg and his adherents did not visualize an actual city when they thought and spoke of New Jerusalem. Regarding New Jerusalem, Swedenborg's ideas were as figurative and postmillennialist as Joseph Smith's were literal

⁸ "In dealing with the Shakers or Harmonists, writers constantly avoided giving their readers an adequate view of the religion of these groups." (Sataty, "Utopian visions and their critics: Press reactions to American utopias in the antebellum era," 2 vols. [Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1986], 520.)

⁹ See footnote 6.

¹⁰ Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christian Religion* (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1980), 782.

¹¹ Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Doctrine of the New Jerusalem concerning the Lord*, translated and edited by John Faulkner Potts (New York: American Swedenborg Publishing Society, 1926), 63.

and premillennialist. Any resemblance is only in semantics, not in the actual meaning of the concept.

The third problem with such attempts to connect Joseph Smith with the ideas of other religious figures is often their inherent anachronism. Swedenborg died in 1772 (thirty-three years before the birth of Joseph Smith) without having established any kind of church.¹² The first American branch of the New Church was established in Pennsylvania in 1817, but the slow growing movement had not extended much beyond the boundaries of Pennsylvania when it established its largest church in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, in 1897.¹³ Swedenborg's influence in America was far too narrow during Joseph Smith's early development as a religious leader to have exerted the kind of influence suggested by Harrod.

Regarding Joseph Smith's actual documented religious education, Richard Bushman wrote that there is no "record of church attendance until religious excitement stirred the neighborhood in his early teen years."¹⁴ On the nineteenth-century western frontier, however, this did not imply that the people were irreligious or uninterested in spiritual subjects. The round of "awakenings" and revivals in New England demonstrate that the subject of religion was freely and frequently discussed. The Smiths' lack of formal church attendance also does not mean that they did not have some association with preachers of the day.¹⁵ Despite their contact with organized religion, Joseph's own mother admits that her third son did not read—

¹² Robert Hindmarsh founded the first New Church organization in 1787.

¹³ This information was found at Thado Tshabalala, "New Church of Jerusalem" [document online], available from <http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/borg.html>, Internet.

¹⁴ Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 4.

¹⁵ Joseph Smith related his account of his First Vision to a Methodist minister (see JS-H 1:21), who might have been one George Lane (see *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 34-35.) Lucy also mentions being particularly interested in "a man [who] commenced laboring in the neighborhood [in 1824], to effect a union of the different churches, in order that all might be agreed, and thus worship God with one heart and with one mind." (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother* [Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, Inc., 1945], 90.)

even the Bible—as much as he pondered.¹⁶ Another possible association that might have contributed to Joseph’s religious education was a “juvenile debating club.” However, this group of young deists would have had little effect on Joseph’s understanding of Zion and New Jerusalem since they were given to discussing “questions of moral and political ethics” rather than eschatological or millenarian doctrines.¹⁷ After 1820, Joseph mostly “stayed away from preachers.”¹⁸ Thus, his religious education came almost solely from his family and, as he testified, divine sources. But it must be remembered that his family was immersed in the nineteenth-century milieu of millenarianism that would undoubtedly have exposed them all to Zion and New Jerusalem ideas and principles.

Why would Joseph Smith stay away from formal religion after 1820, the year in which he beheld his astonishing First Vision? The most profound experience of this period of Joseph’s life no doubt influenced his attitude toward established religion. Young Joseph affirmed that he had seen God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ in a grove of trees near his Manchester home in 1820. Speaking of Joseph’s contemporary professors of religion, Jesus Christ said to him, “They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof” (JS-H 1:19). This echo of Jesus’ indictment of the Jews in his own day (see Matt 15:8-9) surely dissuaded the fourteen-year-old budding prophet from depending on contemporary religious leaders for an understanding of the doctrines of the

¹⁶ Bushman, 54, 94. Modern readers might be tempted to interpret this statement to mean that Joseph had only a poor or cursory understanding of the Bible at this time. Be it remembered that nineteenth-century America was a far more biblically literate people than even the general religious public today. Thus, what might be termed a mediocre understanding of the Bible in the nineteenth century would be at least above average and likely far superior to a “mediocre” understanding of the scriptures today. See Chapters One and Two of this thesis for a discussion of the Bible’s entrenchment in early America. This biblical saturation lasted well into Joseph Smith’s day.

¹⁷ Bushman, 55.

¹⁸ Bushman, 94.

gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁹ Turning to these religious leaders whom he purported were “all corrupt” and in whom he had no confidence in interpreting the Bible would seem inconsistent.

Prior to 1820 Joseph Smith had only two burning questions, how to be saved and which church was right.²⁰ It is doubtful that he had any interest whatever at this young age in building Zion or founding New Jerusalem. And while he recorded that on that momentous occasion in 1820 the Father and the Son told him “many other things” (JS-H 1:20), he gives no indication that the subject of Zion was broached at all. It is the opinion of the present author that prior to 1823, Joseph Smith may have heard of Zion and New Jerusalem, perhaps had thought about what they might mean, but he had no concrete idea of what was entailed in the terms that would come to mean so much to him and the rest of the Church a decade later.

A period of preparation—1823-1827

Though Robert Millet suggested, “Joseph Smith's first serious encounter with the concept of *Zion* probably came in his translation of the Book of Mormon,” the present author proposes that Joseph Smith was prepared for this “serious encounter” by his religious environment. Though Joseph Smith had heard the terms Zion and New Jerusalem and read the Bible on his own, his interviews with the angel Moroni helped Joseph Smith see how to organize and interpret all of those previous ideas and move forward with the latter-day establishment of Zion.²¹ During the night of September 21-22, 1823, Joseph Smith reported that the resurrected Book of Mormon prophet Moroni visited him repeatedly in his bedroom.

¹⁹ For a good example of Joseph's general attitude toward the religiosity of the preachers of the day, see Lucy Mack Smith, 90-91.

²⁰ Bushman, 54.

²¹ Robert L. Millet, “Quest for the City of God: The Doctrine of Zion in Modern Revelation,” in Susan Easton Black et al., *Doctrines for Exaltation: The 1989 Sperry Symposium on the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1989), 170.

Their interviews “occupied the whole of that night” (Joseph Smith-History 1:47). During this time, the seventeen-year-old Joseph was told many things in preparation for his call to bring forth the Book of Mormon and accomplish the work God had for him. As part of their interviews, Joseph recollected in his official history that Moroni quoted to him five specific passages from the Bible.

However, he also stated that Moroni “quoted many other passages of scripture which cannot be mentioned here” (JS-H 1:41). In their analysis of letters written by Oliver Cowdery in the Church newspaper *Messenger and Advocate* from 1834 to 1837, Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig J. Ostler identified thirty scriptural texts upon which Moroni may have “offered many explanations” (JS-H 1:41) during his interviews with Joseph Smith.²² Of these thirty, approximately half can be related to the subject of this thesis. Joseph Smith heard Moroni’s instructions four times in less than twelve hours. Even if Oliver Cowdery’s aforementioned list is only a possible sample of what Moroni taught Joseph on this occasion, it provides some biblical material—with angelic commentary—to explore for a clearer understanding of how Moroni accelerated the development of Joseph Smith’s ideas regarding Zion and the holy city of New Jerusalem.

At least three of the possible texts—Deuteronomy 32:23-24, 43; Psalms 91:6; and Psalms 100—validate the common American millenarian sentiments of the nineteenth century. These verses speak of an impending judgment upon the nations of the earth by which the wicked will be destroyed and the righteous protected and rewarded. These verses

²² Here are the proposed references: Deuteronomy 32:23-24, 43; Psalms 91:6; 100; 107; 144; 146:10; Isaiah 1:7, 23-24, 25-26; 2:1-4; 4:5-6; 11; 13:10; 24:20; 28:21; 29:11, 13-14; 43:6; 59:20; Jeremiah 16:16, 19; 19:3; 30:18-21; 31:1, 6, 8-9, 27-28, 31-33; 50:5; Joel 2:28-32; Malachi 3 (part, but Joseph nor Oliver specify which part); Malachi 4 (with variation); Matthew 19:30; John 10:27; Acts 3:22-23; Romans 11:25; 1 Corinthians 1:27-29; and 1 Thessalonians 4:7. (See Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig J. Ostler, *Revelations of the Restoration* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000], 26-27.) *The Pearl of Great Price, Student Manual*, published by the

illustrate the “apocalyptic dualism of early Mormonism” examined more thoroughly by Grant Underwood.²³

Psalm 107 foretells a gathering from all lands, east, west, north, and south. It depicts a wandering, hungry, thirsty people who could find “no city to dwell in” calling upon the Lord and being led “by the right way” to “a city of habitation.” This city would be a place of salvation, deliverance, peace, praise, healing, prosperity, rejoicing, and void of all iniquity. This idea of gathering is central to all those who have attempted to build Zion in any age. Having been taught this concept by such spectacular revelation, however, would have made any incidental correlation in the world of little or no consequence for the Prophet Joseph.

One of the first direct references used by Moroni in which Joseph would have heard the word Zion in context of the Restoration was when the angel proclaimed, “The Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations” (Ps. 146:10). Regardless of when Moroni used this reference in his discourse, Joseph could have gleaned from this that God is the ruler of Zion, and the proper title for his subjects in all generations is “Zion.”

In the midst of restorationist-saturated America, a verse like Isaiah 1:26 must have been interesting for young Joseph: “And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.” Not knowing what Moroni said about this verse makes it impossible to know what Joseph learned from it. The verse contains inklings of a real city to be established after ancient patterns following the restoration of the Lord’s judges and “counsellors” to the earth.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 2000, corroborates four of these references, citing them slightly differently: 1 Cor. 1:27-28; Isa. 28:21; 29:11-14; and John 10:16.

²³ See Grant Underwood’s chapter “Apocalyptic Dualism in Early Mormonism” in *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 42-57. In brief, this dualism depicts the exaltation of the righteous and the destruction of the wicked at the Second Coming.

Affirming that Joseph indeed lived “in the last days,” Moroni may have quoted to him the passage in Isaiah 2:3, which reads in part, “for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” Underwood pointed out that Joseph Smith “interpreted ‘Zion’ and ‘Jerusalem’ [in Isaiah 2:3] as two different places, rather than viewing the passage as a manifestation of Hebrew poetic parallelism which would make the terms synonymous.” It is entirely feasible that Joseph learned to do so from his angelic tutor. Thus, “nearly every mention of ‘Zion’ in Old Testament prophecy was understood as having reference to the New (read ‘other’) Jerusalem to be built in America.”²⁴ Since Joseph Smith learned from an angelic messenger that Zion was to be built in America at a time in his life when he was “so unacquainted with men and things” (JS-H 1:8), then later contact with similar notions from contemporary or preceding religious figures would have had little significance.

Referring to Isaiah 4:5-6, Moroni impressed upon the young man the importance of Zion as a place of safety and defense from the judgments and calamities to come upon the earth. For the faithful, refuge from the latter-day storm would be found in “mount Zion.”

Isaiah 11, which we know with surety was quoted to Joseph (see JS-H 1:40), and Isaiah 43:6 both emphasize heavily the gathering of Israel and the rest of the elect in the last days. The chialistic Latter-day Saint concept of the gathering requires a gathering place. Although such a place would not be designated for another seven years, the Latter-day Saint leader was aware of its necessity early on in the Church’s history.²⁵ As mentioned in chapter one, the concept of gathering was inextricably connected with the concept of Zion.

Another necessary prerequisite was made known to the Prophet in Isaiah 59:20: “And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith

²⁴ Underwood, 63.

²⁵ Ohio was the first designated gathering place for the Latter-day Saints in December 1830 (see D&C 37).

the LORD.” By this declaration, Joseph Smith could assume that in order for the Second Coming to occur, Zion must be established. Christ could not come if there was no Zion for him to come to and thus fulfill all the prophecies that had been spoken concerning his return.

While the references most likely used from Jeremiah 31 underscored the literal gathering in the last days, they also stressed the role of the descendants of Ephraim in the final aggregation. Verses 31-33 add the important concept of covenants to the gathering process. Using Jeremiah, Moroni also equated coming to Zion with coming to God. Only in a covenant, gathered Zion would the Lord “be their God, and they shall be my people.” Moroni may have used the prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the return of the post-exilic Jews to typify the gathering of the elect to the American Zion in the last days: “They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, *saying*, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant *that* shall not be forgotten” (Jer. 50:5). By this time, Joseph must have been saturated with the concept of gathering to the holy city of Zion.

We know also from the Prophet’s official history that Moroni quoted Joel 2:28-32 on this occasion. In a visionary, eschatological context Joel foretold that deliverance would come from two places in the last days: Mount Zion and Jerusalem. And if Joseph had been taught earlier by the angel that Zion meant a holy city in America, then there seemed only one logical course of action: to build Zion.

Finally, we do not know what details Moroni may have given about the holy city at this time, but in quoting Malachi 3 he added a holy temple to the restoration plan. If Zion was to be built before the Second Coming as Isaiah prophesied, Malachi added the fact that the city must include a temple to which the messenger of the covenant (Christ) would suddenly come (Mal. 3:1). The full understanding of the significance of the temple in Latter-day Saint

theology would be two decades in the making, but allusion to it restored “the biblical Zion traditions [which] are usually tightly associated with the theology of the temple.”²⁶

While Moroni related “the very same things” to Joseph Smith four times on September 21-22, 1823 (see JS-H 1:45, 46, 49), it should also be noted that the young Prophet met with the same angel every four years at the Hill Cumorah near Palmyra, New York. Joseph said of these visits that he “received instructions and intelligence from him at each of our interviews, respecting what the Lord was going to do, and how and in what manner his kingdom was to be conducted in the last days” (JS-H 1:54). Before Joseph Smith even received the gold plates to begin translating the Book of Mormon, he was well on his way to being trained in the doctrine of Zion. His divine tutoring from 1823 to 1827 consisted not so much of an introduction to the concept of Zion, but in giving Joseph “instruction and intelligence . . . respecting what the Lord was going to do, and how and in what manner his kingdom was to be conducted in the last days” (JS-H 1:54).

The Book of Mormon and Zion—1827-1829

“Gordon Wood [a prominent American historian] recognized the Book of Mormon as ‘undoubtedly the most distinctive and important force in establishing the new faith.’”²⁷ Joseph Smith declared that the Book of Mormon was “the keystone of our religion.”²⁸ Modern Latter-day Saints continue to affirm that “as a source for an understanding of the plain and simple doctrines of salvation, the Book of Mormon surpasses any scripture available to men.”²⁹ An understanding of the Church’s basic beliefs regarding Zion and New

²⁶ David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6 vols., 6:1098.

²⁷ As cited in Dan Erickson, *As A Thief in the Night* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, Inc., 1998), 49.

²⁸ HC 4:461, November 28, 1841.

²⁹ Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978), 92.

Jerusalem entails a thorough understanding of what the Book of Mormon teaches on the subject.

Of course, the Book of Mormon has always had its critics. Concerning the subject of Zion in the Book of Mormon, Sandra Tanner implies that Joseph Smith got his idea for an American New Jerusalem from Samuel Sewall, whom we have already mentioned. However, she also offered no evidence that indicates Joseph might have read Sewall's book, which was nearly one hundred years old from its last printing. It is highly unlikely that Joseph Smith, whom his educated wife referred to as lacking the learning in his youth to "neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter," would have ever picked up a book entitled *Phaenomena Quaedam Apocalyptica*.³⁰

"If, however, the *Book of Mormon* had been no more than another speculative account of American Israelism," argues J.F.C. Harrison, "it would not have made the impact that it did." The impact of the Book of Mormon on the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can hardly be overstated. "One of the problems of popular millenarian religion," continued Harrison, "is that it has to handle complex theological and philosophical issues at a level which can be generally understood; but the level must not be too simple or it will not satisfy those seekers after salvation whose rejection of their earlier beliefs is the motive for their turning to the new prophet."³¹ In other words, there had to be something of substance in the book that inspired its readers.

The word Zion occurs 45 times in the Book of Mormon, the first being in 1 Nephi

³⁰ "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," *Saints' Herald* 26, 1 October 1879, 289-290, as cited in Royal Skousen, "Toward a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon" in *BYU Studies*, vol. 30, no. 1, Winter 1990, 51.

³¹ J.F.C. Harrison, *The second coming: popular millenarianism, 1780-1850* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1979), 183, 184. Grant Underwood also refutes such criticism of the Book of Mormon as "merely another variation of the old 'lost tribes' theory" (see Underwood, 66-67).

13:37 where the power of God is promised to those “who seek to bring forth my Zion.” New Jerusalem is mentioned seven times, which does not seem to indicate that it was a major part of the substance that might have attracted converts to the new Church. But a survey of early Church literature shows that 3 Nephi 21, which describes the latter-day gathering of Israel and the building of New Jerusalem upon the American continent, was the most commonly cited chapter by the early Latter-day Saint leaders and writers. Ether 13, which also discusses the idea that New Jerusalem would be built upon this continent, was also high on the list of often cited Book of Mormon chapters.

An examination of how often early Church writers and leaders quoted specific Book of Mormon passages reveals that Ether 13:4-8, which pointedly showed that New Jerusalem is to be built in America, and 3 Nephi 21:1-7, which discusses the establishment of Zion, are the two most popular references cited in early Church literature. In fact, the subject of New Jerusalem was one of the principal themes developed out of such passages.³²

In 2 Nephi 10:11-13, the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob gave one of the earliest and clearest references showing that America is the land of Zion. Understanding that the Nephites lived on this continent, we read: “And this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land . . . And I will fortify this land against all other nations. And he that fighteth against Zion shall perish, saith God.” Clearly the land of America and the land of Zion were synonymous for nineteenth-century believers in the Book of Mormon. But this idea in and of itself was not particularly novel since we have shown how many Americans had believed similar things for over two centuries prior to the publication of the Book of Mormon.

³² The statistics and research cited in this and the preceding paragraph can be found in Underwood, 77-80.

The Book of Mormon contained ideas that would have been particularly powerful to Americans. For over two centuries, from the Puritans to the fiery evangelists of Joseph Smith's day, American religion had preached the building of Zion and New Jerusalem on this continent. But the Book of Mormon offered at least three new concepts that no one had promoted before.

The first thing that the Book of Mormon claimed that no one to that point had dared to claim, at least publicly, was that Jesus Christ himself had prophesied anciently that New Jerusalem was to be built on this continent. Guesses had been ventured, typology had been employed, but no one declared that they had received a revelation where Jesus Christ had said in a former age, "And it shall come to pass that I will establish my people, O house of Israel. And behold, this people will I establish in this land [i.e. America], unto the fulfilling of the covenant which I made with your father Jacob; and it shall be a New Jerusalem. And the powers of heaven shall be in the midst of this people, even I will be in the midst of you" (3 Ne. 20:21-22; see also 3 Ne. 21:12, 14, 22-28). Therefore, Latter-day Saints believed that it was not only a possibility, but also a prophecy and a commandment from the highest authority to establish the New Jerusalem here. When Jesus used Zion and New Jerusalem as possible synonyms (see 3 Ne. 21:1, 22-24), the connection received the highest divine approbation.³³

Secondly, the Book of Mormon provided a model for Zion here in America. About AD 34, after the ministry of the resurrected Jesus among the Nephites, they established a society that met all the criteria for Zion; and it lasted for over 150 years. One of the objections Increase Mather and others had to being able to establish New Jerusalem in

³³ We have already discussed how Moroni might have made this connection with Joseph Smith. See also Underwood, 63.

America was that they simply did not believe that human beings were capable of such a task without drastic divine intervention, i.e. the Second Coming. But now the Latter-day Saints had a precedent and grounds for believing that it was indeed possible. It had been done before, and they were going to do it again. Jesus Christ had come eighteen hundred years earlier to inspire the Nephites, and He had reappeared to Joseph Smith and others to encourage them in establishing Zion in the last days.

The third fresh idea from the Restored Gospel regarding New Jerusalem was the belief that Ether, prophet to a civilization that became extinct five or six centuries before the birth of Christ, “spake concerning a New Jerusalem upon this land.” In fact, he even explained why the holy city in the land of Israel could not meet the requirements of the New Jerusalem spoken of in the Bible (see Ether 13:2-10). Ancient prophetic claims that New Jerusalem would be built upon the American continent could only be deduced earlier by biblical typological interpretation. Joseph Smith claimed with revelatory authority that an American New Jerusalem was part of the divine eschatological plan and that God had revealed such to prophets millennia earlier. Such passages burst what W.W. Phelps, an early Latter-day Saint convert, called “the veil [sic] which had been cast over the prophecies of the Old Testament,” thus erasing “that embarrassment under which thousands had labored for years to learn how the Saints would know where to gather.”³⁴

Did such doctrines have an impact on early converts to the Church and to the rapid rise of “Mormonism” in America? Richard Bushman answered, “Unfortunately, very few [early converts] said what it was in the [Book of Mormon] that caught their attention and

³⁴ Underwood, 77.

finally convinced them.”³⁵ While Bushman’s statement is generally true, at least two converts reported what it was they learned from the Book of Mormon that affected their conversion.

W.W. Phelps wrote in a letter published in the *Messenger and Advocate*, “Whenever I have meditated upon the book of Mormon, and looked ahead at the glory which will be brought to pass . . . I have been filled with hope; filled with light; filled with joy, and filled with satisfaction. What a wonderful volume! . . . by that book I learned that the new Jerusalem, even Zion was to be built up on this continent; by that book I found a key to the holy prophets; and by that book began to unfold the mysteries of God, and I was made glad.”³⁶ One of the keys to which Phelps probably referred is the idea that Zion in the Old Testament meant New Jerusalem (e.g. Joseph Smith later referred to the Zion spoken of by David in Psalm 102 as the New Jerusalem to be built upon this continent). What Phelps thought about Zion and New Jerusalem prior to joining the Latter-day Saints may be irrecoverable, but he certainly took notice of the concept as it was taught by Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon.

Heber C. Kimball, who became one of the Church’s original twelve Apostles, had a similar experience with the concept of Zion prior to his joining the Church. After he had heard the message of the Latter-day Saints, but before he accepted their offer for baptism, Kimball was conversing with members of the Young family one day when

The glory of God shone on us, and we saw the gathering of the Saints to Zion, and the glory that would rest upon them and many things connected with that great event, such as the sufferings and persecutions which would come upon the people of God, and the calamities and judgements which would come upon the World. These things caused great joy to spring up in our bosoms that

³⁵ Bushman, 140. See also Susan Easton Black, *Stories from the Early Saints Converted by the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992).

³⁶ W.W. Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate*, September, 1835, vol. 1, no. 12, 178.

we were hardly able to constrain ourselves and we did shout aloud. 'Hosanna to God and the Lamb.'³⁷

Obviously, one of the subjects that the Latter-day Saint missionaries preached to the Youngs and the Kimballs was the doctrine of gathering to Zion. Familiar with the biblical prophecies as they were, Heber Kimball and Brigham Young and many of their families joined the Church and gave their all to what they believed was a divinely inspired organization.

While "the discovery of additional scripture in itself inspired faith in people who were looking for more certain evidence of God in their lives,"³⁸ the ideas conveyed in the Book of Mormon gave early Latter-day Saints hope and power to embark on a series of the most exemplary Zion building exploits in modern history.³⁹ Other revelations that Joseph Smith received from 1829 to 1835 regarding the building of Zion and New Jerusalem built upon the foundations that had been laid incident to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

Building the New Jerusalem—1829-1835

In April 1829, Joseph Smith used the term Zion in a revelation of strictly modern origin. To Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith said simply, "Seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion" (D&C 6:6). Similar revelations were given to Hyrum Smith, Joseph Knight, Sr., David Whitmer, Emma Smith, and the Church in general (see D&C 11:6; 12:6; 14:6; 25:2; and 21:4-8). By this time, Joseph used the term Zion almost exclusively to refer to an actual city to be established here in America. These references must be viewed in that context. Thus Joseph encouraged the Saints to build Zion, but the place had not yet been revealed.

³⁷ As cited in Gordon D. Pollock, *In Search of Security: The Mormons and the Kingdom of God on Earth, 1830-1844* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1989), 134.

³⁸ Bushman, 142.

³⁹ See McGowan, 151-152.

By September 1830 the subject of Zion and New Jerusalem were so often discussed in the Church that some of the early Saints become over-anxious to receive the Lord's word as to where they should begin to build their "city of habitation." Hiram Page claimed that he had a "seer stone," through which he was receiving revelation on various subjects, including "the upbuilding of Zion."⁴⁰ Joseph Smith revealed to the Church that "no man knoweth where the city Zion shall be built, but it shall be given hereafter" (D&C 28:9). The time was not yet, and the Church had to wait. However, one of the first clues as to the location of the New Jerusalem of the last dispensation was given: "it shall be on the borders by the Lamanites" (D&C 28:9). At the time, the border between whites and Indian territory extended north to south along the western side of Iowa and Missouri.

Shortly after this revelation was received, Parley Pratt, Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, and Ziba Peterson were called on a mission "into the wilderness among the Lamanites" (D&C 32:2). A mission to teach the gospel to the Lamanites was no small thing for a people who believed the Indians had a divine role in building New Jerusalem (see 3 Ne. 21:22-25). Oliver Cowdery sensed its significance when he accepted his call: "I, Oliver, being commanded by the Lord God, to go forth unto the Lamanites, to proclaim glad tidings of great joy unto them . . . and also, to rear up a pillar as a witness where the temple of God shall be built, in the glorious New Jerusalem."⁴¹ After traveling through Ohio and bringing the restoration message to Sidney Rigdon and his followers, the proselytizing group came to Independence, Missouri, on January 13, 1831. It was the first time ordained ministers of the

⁴⁰ HC 1:109, September 1830.

⁴¹ From the Journal History of the Church, as cited in *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual* [Church Educational System manual, 1981], 66.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had been in Jackson County, a place that unknown to them at the time, had great meaning in the future of their faith.⁴²

Around this same time, Joseph Smith began his inspired revision of the Bible. Beginning in the Old Testament and using various scribes, mostly the newly converted Sidney Rigdon, the Prophet studied the Bible and added prophetic commentary and insights that would clarify, correct, and restore fundamental truths to the ancient record. When Enoch is mentioned in Genesis 5, Joseph Smith added over ninety verses on the ministry of this ancient patriarch. Robert Millet asserted, “Joseph Smith’s discovery of the Zion of Enoch through his work of Bible translation became pivotal in the quest for a society of Zion among the Mormons.”⁴³ Enoch’s Zion constituted the great prototype for the American Zion, superseding even the Nephite Zion we have already mentioned.⁴⁴ Specifically, the Saints through Joseph Smith learned that Zion, “the City of Holiness,” was a place that would enjoy matchless divine guidance and protection (see Moses 7:13-17), have economic equality, political stability, and religious unity (Moses 7:16-18), and foster unparalleled righteousness (Moses 7:19).

From the Book of Moses, the Prophet and the growing Church learned more details about what Zion was like and how it was to be built. Indeed, the entire revelation known as the Book of Moses teaches lessons and principles that a people must follow to build Zion.⁴⁵

⁴² The missionaries were enthusiastic about their prospects among the Lamanites, or “the remnant of Jacob,” in this area. But problems with the Indian agents and other denominations soon quelled their hopes. For further information, see *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual*, 66; and *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, [Church Educational System, 2nd ed., 2000], 85-88.

⁴³ Robert L. Millet, “Quest for the City of God: The Doctrine of Zion in Modern Revelation,” 173.

⁴⁴ Early Latter-day Saints also believed that Enoch’s city constituted another Zion precedent upon what would become the American continent. See Orson F. Whitney, *Conference Report*, April 1909, afternoon session, 76; Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses*, 12:338; and Erastus Snow, *Journal of Discourses*, 24:65-66.

⁴⁵ See James R. Harris, “Joseph Smith and the Book of Moses,” address given at First Annual Institute Symposium, Salt Lake Institute of Religion, January 1965, in L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

For example, the experiences of Adam, Enoch, and Moses teach the absolute necessity of ongoing revelation, the necessity of choosing God over Satan, the omnipotence and omniscience of God, the power of the priesthood, the necessity of ordinances and covenants, the value of a prophet-seer, and the place of the latter-day New Jerusalem in the overall eschatological picture. The Book of Moses added to the general enthusiasm already felt by the Saints to build Zion and establish the New Jerusalem among them.

About the same time the Prophet translated the portion of the Book of Moses that focused on Enoch's Zion, the first commandment concerning a literal gathering was given. The Church was commanded to gather in Ohio (see D&C 37). On January 2, 1831, Joseph Smith received revelation that referred to "the Zion of Enoch," indicating the significance of this holy city as a type for their New Jerusalem. In the same revelation, the Saints must have been disappointed to learn that Ohio was not to be the place for the New Jerusalem (see D&C 38:18-20; also D&C 64:21). Kirtland was a temporary gathering place to prepare the Saints to build New Jerusalem in a different "land of promise."

Zion remained in the forefront of Joseph's vision for the new Church. Potential converts, like James Covill, were told up front that their conversion to the Church would involve building Zion (see D&C 39:13).⁴⁶ The Saints were not bashful about their intentions to build a holy city.

During February and March 1831, the New Jerusalem continued to be a focus of the revelations received by Joseph Smith. In February, the Saints were promised that the place of the new sacred city was about to be revealed (see D&C 42:9, 35, 62). They were also told that it was to be a place for making covenants that would truly make the Saints the people of

⁴⁶ For more information on James Covill, see Susan Easton Black, *Who's Who in the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997), 72.

God (see D&C 42:67). In one of the most apocalyptic revelations to Joseph Smith, the Saints were promised safety, power, divine protection, peace and salvation in their forthcoming New Jerusalem (see D&C 45:64-71). While these revelations espoused traditional Puritan notions of the New Jerusalem, it must be remembered that for many Americans those ideas had faded over a century ago. Only some Americans, especially in New England, still believed in the vision of John Winthrop, Roger Williams, and John Davenport, but such chiliastic premillennialism was not the popular religious perspective of the era.

The Latter-day Saints, however, did have contact with other literal utopian apocalyptic groups. One example is their contact with the Shakers, who also believed that they were building New Jerusalem in New York and Massachusetts and then throughout most of New England and other states.⁴⁷ A former well-to-do Shaker, Leman Copley, had joined the Latter-day Saints, but still clung to some of his former Shaker beliefs. Although D&C 49 was initially intended to correct Copley's beliefs, Sidney Rigdon, Parley P. Pratt, and Leman Copley read it to a Shaker community near Cleveland, Ohio. The only mention of Zion in this revelation was that it would only flourish when the people gathered to the place appointed by God, implying that if the Shakers truly wanted to build Zion they needed to follow the revelations of Joseph Smith (see D&C 49:25). What would be true for the Shakers was, of course, true for the Latter-day Saints as well. As Joseph Smith would express it years later, "In regard to the building up of Zion, it has to be done by the counsel of Jehovah, by the revelations of heaven."⁴⁸

On June 7, 1831, another revelation was received which mentioned Missouri by name for the first time. The revelation specified that the next conference of the Church would be

⁴⁷ See Chapter Three, 71-72.

⁴⁸ HC 5:64, July 1842.

held “in Missouri, upon the land which I will consecrate unto my people, which are a remnant of Jacob, and those who are heirs according to the covenant” (D&C 52:2). The specific language of this revelation must have thrilled those who believed in the Book of Mormon. In 3 Nephi 21:22-25, Jesus had referred to the ancestors of the Lamanites as “the remnant of Jacob” and promised that when their descendants had “come in unto the covenant” they would be given land in the Americas as an inheritance and build the New Jerusalem. They were promised that if they were faithful, God would “hasten the city [i.e. New Jerusalem] in its time” (D&C 52:43). The Saints were getting closer and closer to their longed-for Zion.

Twelve days later, Joseph Smith wrote, “I started from Kirtland, Ohio, for the land of Missouri, agreeable to the commandment before received [see D&C 52:2-5], wherein it was promised that if we were faithful, the land of our inheritance, even the place for the city of the New Jerusalem, should be revealed.”⁴⁹ The Saints’ anticipation for the designation of the New Jerusalem site came to fruition on July 20, 1831. In Jackson County, Missouri, Joseph Smith made public that “this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion . . . 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 57:2, 3).

News of the revelation traveled with lightning speed. By August 1, 1831, Saints who had previously obeyed the revelation to assemble at their temporary gathering place in Thompson, Ohio (approximately 600 miles away), and others who had joined the Church in Colesville, New York (approximately 800 miles away), had come pouring into Jackson County. The Saints were ready, willing, and eager to get to work building the New

⁴⁹ HC 1:188.

Jerusalem. Polly Knight is a good example of this zeal. Though aged and dying, “her only or her greatest desire was to set her feet upon the land of Zion.”⁵⁰ On August 7, 1831, the same day as Polly’s funeral, the Prophet declared a new beatitude, “Blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion” (D&C 59:3).

Immediately, “the land of Zion was now the most important temporal object in view,” wrote Joseph Smith.⁵¹ Two revelations, D&C 63 and 64, concerning the mode of gathering, dispensing lands, and the rules of consecration and stewardship in the New Jerusalem, were received in August and September 1831. In October 1831, another revelation made plain that missionaries were to share the gospel with the intent to “push [i.e. gather] many people to Zion” (D&C 66:11). Gathering to Zion became the end result of conversion to the Church.

On November 3, 1831, another revelation affirmed the central place of Zion/New Jerusalem in Latter-day Saint eschatology. The Saints must gather to Zion to be saved from the impending worldwide calamities (see D&C 133:2-9). The land of Zion, Jackson County, was to become the hub of the Church and the center of missionary work to the rest of the world (see D&C 133:9). The urgency of gathering to the New Jerusalem was emphasized with phrases like “flee unto Zion” (D&C 133:12). The Saints were assured that the Savior would come to New Jerusalem to usher in his millennial reign (D&C 133:56).

From November 1831 to November 1832, more revelations were received concerning the upbuilding of Zion. Indeed, “Zion was the magic word in the early days of the Church. No name save the name of Christ stirred the hearts of the Saints more than the word ‘Zion.’”⁵² Most of these revelations concerned temporal affairs, such as dispensing lands of

⁵⁰ HC 1:199, fn.

⁵¹ HC 1:207, August 1831.

⁵² James R. Harris, “Joseph Smith and the Book of Moses,” 1.

inheritance to newly arrived immigrants to Zion (see D&C 68, 69, 72, 82, 85). Counsel came from the leaders of the Church to try to maintain some order in the Saints' enthusiasm to gather to Zion.⁵³

However, in the minds of the Latter-day Saints their Zion was not merely another utopian communitarian experiment like the communities of Robert Owen. In "Mormonism," spiritual and temporal salvation and welfare are inseparably intertwined (see D&C 29:34-35). Mount Zion was not just an advertising ploy for a political, social, and economic venture; it was the New Jerusalem where a temple would be built and the glory of the Lord would come down upon a new generation (see D&C 84:2-5).

During the fall of 1832, the Saints were writing hymns as if New Jerusalem was already an established fact. D&C 84 contains an anthem reminiscent of the song of the victorious redeemed followers of God from the Book of Revelation (see 14:3; 15:3) and the newly discovered prophecy of Enoch (see Moses 7:62-63). Its reference to Zion justifies its inclusion here: "The Lord hath brought again Zion . . . The Lord hath brought down Zion from above. The Lord hath brought up Zion from beneath . . . And she is clothed with the glory of her God; For he stands in the midst of his people" (D&C 84:99, 100, 101). The *Evening and Morning Star* carried these hymnal words to the Saints throughout the region: "Before creation's second birth,/ We hope with him to stand./ Then he will give us a new name./ With robes of righteousness,/ And in the *New Jerusalem*,/ Eternal happiness."⁵⁴ Bent on fulfilling prophecy, the Saints were preparing so that people from all nations could "come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy" (D&C 45:71).

⁵³ See HC 1:278-279.

⁵⁴ "New Jerusalem," *Evening and Morning Star*, W.W. Phelps, ed., October, 1832, vol. 1, no. 5, 40, emphasis in original.

While Nechama Sataty's review of fifty newspapers contemporary with the rise of "Mormonism" showed that none of them referred to the Latter-day Saints as a utopian or communitarian society, the Saints were not bashful about proclaiming their intentions to the public.⁵⁵ For example, Joseph Smith wrote to N.E. Seaton, a newspaper editor, "The city of Zion spoken of by David, in the one hundred and second Psalm, will be built upon the land of America."⁵⁶ In one sentence, the Prophet affirmed the objective of the Church, employing the unique Latter-day Saint mode of interpreting many Old Testament references to Zion.

On June 25, 1833, Joseph Smith, who was still living in Kirtland, sent to Jackson County a drawing of how the city of Zion should be laid out. He envisioned a central temple complex surrounded by neatly organized private building lots in a rectilinear grid. He gave detailed instructions about how lots were to be organized, homes built, and the temple constructed.⁵⁷ The real significance of the city of Zion plan is twofold. First, the plan and its description showed that the Saints revealed their premillennialist intent to build an actual city located in earthly time and space preparatory to the Second Coming of Christ. Secondly, Joseph Smith and the rest of the Saints believed that their plan for Zion would literally transform the entire world: "When this square is thus laid off and supplied, lay off another in the same way, and so fill up the world in these last days; and let every man live in the city,

⁵⁵ Sataty, 516.

⁵⁶ HC 1:315, January 4, 1833.

⁵⁷ See HC 1:357-362. Since many Latter-day Saint scholars have already explored and written on this subject, I have decided not to investigate the subject any further in this thesis. For some of these discussions, see the following selected list: B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 1:311-313; Joseph Fielding Smith, "The New Jerusalem or City Zion," *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946-1949), 2:170-175; Hyrum L. Andrus, *Doctrines of the Kingdom* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973), 295-309; Richard H. Jackson, "The Mormon Village: Genesis and Antecedents of the City of Zion Plan" *BYU Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2, Winter 1977, 223-240; Leonard J. Arrington, "Joseph Smith, Builder of Ideal Communities," in Larry C. Porter and Susan Easton Black, eds., *The Prophet Joseph: Essays on the Life and Mission of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1988), 115-135.

for this is the city of Zion.”⁵⁸ The only real significance for Jackson County was its designation as “the center place.” Zion, in the Latter-day Saint view, would eventually cover the earth—presumably sometime after the Millennium begins—and all people would live in the New Jerusalem, the new earth.

Trouble began to arise in Zion, Jackson County, from within and without, in the summer of 1833. Internally, Church members demonstrated that they were not quite the “pure in heart” that denoted true Zion (see D&C 97:21). Unfortunately, some leaders dealt dishonestly in the buying, selling, and distributing of land inheritances. Meanwhile, the members quarreled and fell victim to human envy. Outside the “holy city” the other residents of Missouri became increasingly concerned that the growing Mormon population presented certain social, political, and economic dangers. When the Saints began living the United Order of Enoch, or the law of consecration, they began dealing almost exclusively with each other in business dealings. This left other Jackson County residents feeling like a boycott might be afoot. Of course, the non-Latter-day Saint inhabitants of Jackson County also objected to certain religious tenets of the new faith.

The revelation known as D&C 97 contained information that emphasized the conditions of the Latter-day Saint hopes for Zion. For the first time, the word “if” occurred in a revelation concerning her success. If the people of Zion built the temple, they would blossom in the wilderness. If the Saints in Zion were indeed “the pure in heart” they would triumph over their persecutors. Zion would only escape the troubles that might befall her “if she observe to do all things whatsoever I have commanded her” (D&C 97:25).

By December 1833, the Saints had mostly been driven from their homes in Jackson County and the attempt to establish Zion teetered on the chasm of failure. In a startling

⁵⁸ HC 1:358, June 25, 1833.

revelation, Joseph Smith made known to the Saints the reasons for their failure. Their internal strife and their failure to build the temple had left them without the divine protection and sanction they desired (see D&C 101:1-9, 41-64).⁵⁹ However, the revelation also contained the assurance that Zion would yet be redeemed, but only “after many days” (D&C 101:62).

The Prophet and the rest of the Saints continued their “weeping for Zion” (D&C 21:8). He and other church leaders began the New Year with supplication for the redemption of Zion. They prayed, “That the Lord would deliver Zion, and gather in his scattered people, to possess it in peace; and also, while in their dispersion, that he would provide for them that they perish not with hunger nor cold. And finally, that God in the name of Jesus would gather his elect speedily, and unveil his face that his saints might behold his glory and dwell with him.”⁶⁰ Despite the temporary setbacks, Joseph and others continued to hope for and plan the establishment of New Jerusalem and the spread of Zion.

In February 1834, the Prophet announced a new revelation that the Saints would “know how to act in the discharge of your duties concerning the salvation and redemption . . . of Zion” (D&C 103:1). The plan detailed the Saints’ “restoration to the land of Zion, to be established, no more to be thrown down” (D&C 103:13). This revelation called for one hundred to five hundred men to follow the Prophet Joseph to assist in reestablishing the Jackson County Latter-day Saint refugees upon their purchased lands. The trek did not ultimately accomplish this task, and the complexities of the endeavor prevent further

⁵⁹ Oliver Cowdery reported to the Prophet, “This great tribulation would not have come upon Zion had it not been for rebellion. . . . It was necessary that these things should come upon us; not only justice demands it, but there was no other way to cleanse the Church.” As cited in Joseph Smith, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, Dean C. Jessee, comp. and ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984), 282-283.

⁶⁰ *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 26.

discussion in this thesis.⁶¹ That the Saints were willing to go to war for Zion, which was precisely what many of them believed they were going to do, demonstrates the level of commitment the early Church had for the cause of Zion.

On June 22, 1834, Zion's Camp was disbanded and the active establishment of their beloved New Jerusalem was put on hold indefinitely. The revelation directing the disbanding of Zion in Jackson County stated, "Mine elders should wait for a little season, for the redemption of Zion" (D&C 105:13). But this did not mean that the Saints abandoned their purpose. While the revelation dissolved Zion's Camp, the United Order in Zion, and active plans to build the city according to the revelations received by Joseph Smith, the Saints were counseled in the same revelation to continued purchasing lands in Jackson County as much as possible for the eventual return of the Saints and the fulfillment of their dream for Zion (see D&C 105:20-30). While immediate plans for Zion were stalled, the promise to the Saints was that eventually "the kingdoms of this world may be constrained to acknowledge that the kingdom of Zion is in very deed the kingdom of our God and his Christ" (D&C 105:32).

The abandonment of the immediate building of the city of Zion did not, however, mean the forsaking of the vision. When Joseph Smith, Sr., gave his Joseph, Jr., his patriarchal blessing on December 9, 1834, he affirmed, "my seed are to inherit the choice land [i.e. America] whereon the Zion of God shall stand in the last days."⁶² In an open letter to the Elders of the Church in the November 1835 issue of the *Messenger and Advocate*, Joseph Smith continued to affirm "that there is a New Jerusalem to be established on this

⁶¹ For more information, consider: Wilburn D. Talbot, "Zion's Camp" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1973); Peter Crawley and Richard Anderson, "The Political and Social Realities of Zion's Camp" in *BYU Studies*, vol. 14, no. 4, Summer 1974, 406; and *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 143ff.

⁶² Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 761.

continent.”⁶³ In the Kirtland temple on April 3, 1836, Joseph Smith prayed that the Church “may gather out the righteous to build a holy city to thy name, as thou hast commanded” (D&C 109:58). Joseph Smith uttered the well-known phrase “We ought to have the building up of Zion as our greatest object” in 1839.⁶⁴ On July 19, 1840, almost nine years after the place for the New Jerusalem was revealed, Joseph maintained his belief that ultimately all of North and South America would be Zion, indeed “the redemption of Zion is the redemption of all N[orth] & S[outh] America.”⁶⁵ On March 1, 1842, just two years before his death, the first President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints wrote, “We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent” (Articles of Faith 1:10). This statement later became part of the canon of scripture for Latter-day Saints and remains so to the present day.

Conclusion

While Latter-day Saint beliefs about Zion shared many similarities with some of the minority of Bible-believing premillennialist Americans, this study of nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints represents a culture that was thoroughly immersed in the cause of Zion. Joseph Smith undoubtedly grew up in an environment that was familiar with the terms he learned to use for the ideal theocratic society he sought to establish. But under the direction of divine authority, he laid the foundations for an idea that has been a driving force for the past, present, and future of one of the world’s fastest growing Christian religions.

⁶³ HC 2:262.

⁶⁴ HC 3:390.

⁶⁵ Joseph Smith, *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, comp. and ed. by Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 415-416, 418. The Prophet repeated this same idea on April 8, 1844. See HC 6:318-319, 321-322, and *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 363.

Conclusion—A Summary Comparison of the Latter-day Saint Doctrine of Zion with Pre-Restoration Ideas Regarding Zion

In the preceding chapters, I have attempted to put the restoration of Zion according to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in its American millenarian context, especially as it is rooted in the Christian Puritan milieu of the seventeenth century. As Robert Millet wrote, “Nothing of consequence arises in a social or intellectual vacuum, and Mormonism was no different.”¹ The doctrines of Zion and New Jerusalem did not originate with Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Nathaniel Wood, George Rapp, Emanuel Swedenborg, Increase Mather, or John Winthrop. Zion predates Peter, Zechariah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, or even King David. Latter-day Saints believe Zion existed long before the kingdom of Israel, not only reaching back to the beginning of time on earth, but in our pre-earth life as well.² Indeed, Joseph Smith declared in the *Times and Seasons*, “The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age.”³

Nineteenth-century Americans, including Joseph Smith, lived in a religiously saturated environment. The subjects of Zion and New Jerusalem came with the territory and

¹ Robert L. Millet, “The Development of the Concept of Zion in Mormon Theology” (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1983), 17. See also *Church History in the Fulness of Times* [Church Educational System, 2nd ed., 2000], 15.

² See Moses 7:13-21. Hugh Nibley has also written, “In every dispensation, we are told, there has been a Zion on the earth; first of all in the time of Adam, when ‘the Holy One of Zion . . . established the foundations of Adam-ondi-Ahman’ (D&C 78:15). After Adam, Enoch had his Zion when ‘the Lord called his people ZION’ and Enoch ‘built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even ZION’ (Moses 7:18-19). But then ‘it came to pass that Zion was not, for God received it up into his own bosom; and from thence went forth the saying, ZION IS FLED’ (Moses 7:69). Zion comes and goes. When the world cannot support Zion, Zion is not destroyed but taken back home. ‘And thou hast taken Zion to thine own bosom, from all thy creations,’ says Moses 7:31. And when the world is qualified to receive Zion, ‘there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made’ (Moses 7:64). Accordingly, the ancient prophets of Israel yearned for the time when Zion would be restored again. (Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, edited by Don E. Norton [Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Co., Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1989], 5-6.)

³ Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols., introduction and notes by B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-1951), 4:609, emphasis

the times. As I have shown in Chapter Five, Joseph Smith's religious tutoring in the concepts of Zion and New Jerusalem was "not of this world" (John 18:36). However, in his prophetic office, the Prophet had to respond to current religious ideas with which he came in contact—if he came in contact with them at all. There were two possible responses. He would reject those he believed were not divine. The other choice was to give a sort of agreeable nod to those ideas that corroborated what he had received by revelation. Inevitably, since the Bible was a primary text of his early spiritual experiences, Latter-day Saint ideas regarding Zion would have some commonalities with the rest of Bible-entrenched America. By way of conclusion, this chapter will compare the doctrine of Zion in the Restored Gospel with those of preceding centuries and see how nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint ideas contrast or compare with the various traditions of Zion in America.

The LDS doctrine of Zion: Differences with some common American ideas of Zion

Perhaps the doctrinal perspective in regards to Zion that is farthest from the nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint view is postmillennialism.⁴ Some postmillennialists, like Richard Baxter of the late seventeenth century, held that Zion/New Jerusalem would not be established until *after* the Second Coming of Christ. His return and reign would create the only conditions possible on earth when a pure Zion could be established. Eighteenth-century sermons, literature, and hymns explicate American postmillennialism.⁵ Zion was the heavenly hope of those who believed in a better world, either after the Second Coming or after death. In contrast, the Restored Gospel sought to bring that distant world into the

added. Although this is in an editorial, Joseph Smith was at this time the editor of the *Times and Seasons* (see HC 4:524, fn).

⁴ Again, this is only in regards to Zion/New Jerusalem. This paper does not attempt an overall comparison of nineteenth-century "Mormonism" with all postmillennialist doctrines.

⁵ See Chapter Three, pp. 67-72.

present one. Many American postmillennialists, especially in the nineteenth century, believed the Millennium had already begun. For Joseph Smith and early converts to the Church, the question was settled in a revelation, “For the great Millennium, of which I have spoken by the mouth of my servants, *shall come*” (D&C 43:30, emphasis added).⁶ Zion/New Jerusalem had to be built and blossom as a rose, then the Lord would come quickly to reign on earth a thousand years (see D&C 49:24-28 and 133:4-12, 17-24).

Other differences lie fundamentally in the way Latter-day Saints began to interpret scripture. Latter-day Saints used and believed in the validity of allegory and metaphor for teaching spiritual truths. But from the beginning of the Restoration they rejected spiritualist interpretations for Zion and New Jerusalem.⁷ Thus, early Latter-day Saints would have ignored ideas like the general Quaker interpretation of Zion as a solely spiritual state, as expounded by William Dewsbury.⁸ Likewise, Joseph Smith and early Church converts rejected the propositions of the Philosophes of the eighteenth century who employed Zion and New Jerusalem motifs only as metaphors for perfectible man and triumphal human civilization *sans* deity.⁹ Early Latter-day Saint leaders would have preferred Increase Mather’s belief, “If Men allow themselves this Liberty of Allegorizing, we may at last Allegorize Religion into nothing but Fancy, and say that the Resurrection is past already.”¹⁰ The ideas of spiritualists, like Emanuel Swedenborg, held no place in Latter-day Saint understanding of and interpretation of Zion/New Jerusalem.

⁶ For further evidence that the Latter-day Saints believed the Millennium was yet to come, see D&C 49:6, 24-28 and HC 1:468; 4:497.

⁷ For examples of uniquely Latter-day Saint allegories in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, see Jacob 5 and D&C 88:43-61.

⁸ See Chapter Two, pp. 46-47.

⁹ See Chapter Three, pp. 59-62.

¹⁰ Cited in Michael G. Hall, *The Last American Puritan: The Life of Increase Mather, 1639-1723* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 274-275.

Latter-day Saints' literal reading of Zion meant that the holy city of New Jerusalem would be an actual place. For those sectarians who believed that New Jerusalem would be a literal earthly city, its location was a much-debated issue in the New World from the colonial days through the 1830s. Many Christians believed it was merely the rebuilt and renewed city of Jerusalem in the Holy Land. Some Puritans, like John Davenport, believed it was New England. Others, like Roger Williams, believed it might be elsewhere in the colonies. Samuel Sewall believed it would be in Mexico. In the late 1700s and early 1800s, the western frontier became the preferred spot for New Jerusalem experiments by such figures as John Christopher Hartwick, Herman Husband, George Rapp, Jemima Wilkinson, and the Shakers.

When Joseph Smith announced by revelation that Jackson County, Missouri, was “the place for the city of Zion . . . the center place” (D&C 57:2, 3), he ruled out all other possibilities for *the* New Jerusalem. While the Prophet believed that “the whole of America is Zion itself from north to south,” he maintained that the actual city of New Jerusalem of Book of Mormon and Bible prophecy must be built in Western Missouri in the area of present-day Kansas City and Independence.¹¹ During a time of intense persecution in Jackson County, the Prophet explained, “Zion is the city of our God, and surely Zion cannot fall, neither be moved out of her place” (D&C 97:19). Even as Zion’s Camp was disbanded and the immediate redemption of Zion foregone, the Saints were promised, “Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered . . . [some] shall return, and come to their inheritances, they and their children, with songs of everlasting joy, to build up the waste places of Zion—And all these things that the prophets might be fulfilled” (D&C

¹¹ HC 6:319.

101:17-19). For nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints, the New Jerusalem had to be built in Jackson County and nowhere else.¹²

For a group like the Latter-day Saints so bent on the fulfillment of prophecy, non-religious social reformists, such as Robert Owen, held no appeal. Marion G. Romney points out that Joseph Smith never heard of communism or socialism, since Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published *The Manifesto* four years after the Prophet's martyrdom.¹³ Joseph Smith openly acknowledged that he encountered ideas that resembled his revelations on Zion. For example, regarding the coming forth of the economic application of the Law of Consecration, he writes, "The plan of 'common stock' [the economic plan of a group associated with Sidney Rigdon in Mentor and Kirtland, Ohio], which had existed in what was called 'the family,' whose members generally had embraced the everlasting Gospel, was readily abandoned for the more perfect law of the Lord" as explained in D&C 41-42.¹⁴ Properly understood, the Law of Consecration practiced by the early Saints bears only the most superficial resemblance to communism, socialism, or any of the other communitarian economic plans of previous utopian groups in America.¹⁵ Its system of stewardships,

¹² Beginning in the early twentieth century and continuing with the worldwide growth of the Church, Latter-day Saints began to more fully appreciate Joseph Smith's more expansive teachings about Zion, meaning that it would fill the American continent and the world (see HC 1:358). However, they continue to maintain that a New Jerusalem is yet to be built in Jackson County prior to the Second Coming of Christ. For numerous references to nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint leaders on Jackson County's destiny, see Gerald N. Lund, *The Coming of the Lord* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1971), 99-139. See also Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, edited by Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1982), 441, 619-620; Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, Inc., 1985), 595; Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1988), 588; Harold B. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, edited by Clyde J. Williams (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1996), 408-410.

¹³ See Marion G. Romney, "Socialism and the United Order Compared" *BYU Speeches of the Year, 1966*, March 1, 1966, 3.

¹⁴ HC 1:146-147, February 4, 1831.

¹⁵ See "Warning to Church Members" in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75), 6:17. Hereafter cited as MFP. Also see similar statements in MFP 6:151, 199.

accountability, bishops, and storehouses was far different from what most social reformists and humanists had dreamed of. Social and economic equality was only a part of the Latter-day Saints' objective. In the Zion of the Latter-day Saints, economic and spiritual affairs were inseparably connected, "For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things" (D&C 78:6).

Joseph Smith and the Saints likewise rejected humanistic or naturalistic explanations of Zion. A radical example is David Austin whose revolutionary zeal led him to believe that the newly founded United States government was the "kingdom of God" with the newly-planned Washington, D.C., as its New Jerusalem.¹⁶ Joseph Smith stated the Church's dependence on divine direction in building New Jerusalem: "In regard to the building up of Zion, it has to be done by the counsel of Jehovah, by the revelations of heaven; and we should feel to say, 'if the Lord go not with us, carry us not up hence.'"¹⁷ The Zion of Latter-day Saint eschatology would be built chiefly by prophets with priesthood, not presidents or other civil leaders with political power.

One of Joseph Smith's frequently repeated phrases, "a strife of words and a contest about opinions" (JS-H 1:6), defined American feelings and beliefs on Zion and New Jerusalem prior to the Restoration. I have presented here only a few of the ideas regarding Zion where the Prophet and early "Mormonism" differed from contemporary religious movements. Those who suggest that Joseph Smith is only a product of his religious environment make a blatantly oversimplified proposal. Postmillennialist, spiritualist, communist, and humanist ideas did not fit in Joseph's revealed plan for "the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 60:14).

¹⁶ See Chapter Three, p. 63.

¹⁷ HC 5:64, July 1842.

The LDS doctrine of Zion: Similarities with American Biblical and Christian sources

As taught in a modern Latter-day Saint Church history text, “Many of the principles of Puritanism that shaped and molded Joseph’s environment complemented revealed principles and doctrines he would receive later as a prophet . . . When Joseph later promulgated the concept of an ideal theocratic society, he espoused a principle which Puritan New England could really identify.”¹⁸ What nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints had in common with other contemporary Christians by way of interest in Zion and New Jerusalem can best be summarized by noting their shared belief in the Bible as the word of God.

The Bible was the initial text of Joseph Smith’s early religious education and was quoted extensively to him by heavenly messengers. While interpretations of the Bible differed widely, the Latter-day Saints and believers of other Christian faiths accepted what the Bible teaches about Zion. We can see these similarities as we examine basic characteristics of Zion as outlined in Chapter One of this thesis.

For example, Zion denotes a place of temporal and spiritual safety, protection, and defense. John Winthrop spoke of this aboard the *Arbella*, “wee shall finde that the God of Israell is among us, when tenn of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies.”¹⁹ Joseph Smith called the New Jerusalem “a city of refuge, a place of safety” where “every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety . . . And it shall be said among the wicked: Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible; wherefore we cannot stand” (D&C 45:66, 68, 70). Both shared the belief in Joel’s prophecy, “The Lord also shall roar out of Zion . . . the Lord will

¹⁸ *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 26.

¹⁹ John Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charitie,” in Paul Lauter, ed., *The Heath Anthology of American Literature* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1994), 233.

be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel” (Joel 3:17).

Similar beliefs about Zion as the place for consummate peace were held by Latter-day Saints and non-Latter-day Saints alike. William Bradford expressed this hope in the “Constitution of the New England Confederation, 19 May 1643.”²⁰ For Latter-day Saints, New Jerusalem was “a land of peace . . . the only people [in the last days] that shall not be at war one with another” (D&C 45:66, 69).

Zion themes of unity and equality permeated New Jerusalem experiments for centuries prior to the Restoration. The Puritans, the Quakers, the Shakers, the Separatists of Zoar, the Rappites, “the family” who followed Sidney Rigdon, and the Latter-day Saints all sought social, financial, political, and theological unity. All groups would have agreed with this definition of Zion: “they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them” (Moses 7:18). Their methods varied, but their intentions harmonized.

The source of unity for many of these groups was covenants. Nathaniel Morton pointed out as early as 1602, that “a Covenant to walk with God, and one with another” was the core of Puritan religious society.²¹ This continued with the Halfway Covenant in the latter part of the seventeenth century. Although the inhabitants of Zoar rejected ordinances, they bound themselves in a covenant when they signed the community’s articles of faith.²² For Latter-day Saints, covenants were both the means and the end of gathering to Zion (see 3 Nephi 21:22; D&C 35:24; 38:18-20; 42:66-67; 52:2; and 78:11-15).

²⁰ See Chapter Two, p. 39.

²¹ See Chapter Two, p. 48.

²² William A. Hinds, *American Communities*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1902), 105-106.

went from England to the Netherlands to the Americas as a group. Subsequent groups could have stayed in their various locations to worship according to their beliefs, but they did not. Whether their leader was Jemima Wilkinson, Ann Lee, or George Rapp, they believed that living in close-knit communities was part of building the Zion of God. The Latter-day Saints were no different. All of these groups believed, “The greatest temporal and spiritual blessings which always flow from faithfulness and concerted effort, never attended individual exertion or enterprise.”²³ Such a view of the necessity of gathering relative to the establishment of Zion can be found in the Old and New Testaments (see Ps. 50:2, 5 and Acts 4:31-37).

While there were differences of opinion regarding the American New Jerusalem’s ultimate impact on the rest of the world, those who believed Zion would be built here shared the belief that it would have an impact. The forecast for Zion’s growth and influence in the Bible was that it would be “an ensign to the nations” (see Isa. 5:26; 11:10-16; and 31:8-9). John Winthrop persuaded many that they were indeed the “City on a Hill.” Simon Beiter believed that the Zoar system “would spread all over the world.”²⁴ And we have already cited Joseph Smith’s belief that the entire earth would eventually become Zion.

While temples are a less common similarity, and one adhered to by the Latter-day Saints more than any other New Jerusalem group, there were at least two others we could mention. Joseph Bimeler’s followers had plans to build a temple.²⁵ Followers of Emanuel Swedenborg also noted the importance of the temple in the New Jerusalem and thus called

²² William A. Hinds, *American Communities*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1902), 105-106.

²³ Joseph Smith, HC 4: 272, January 15, 1841.

²⁴ As cited in Hinds, 101.

²⁵ See Chapter Four, p. 86.

their worship centers “temples.” But the Latter-day Saints had a more distinct temple theology than any other group.²⁶

Ultimately, Zion/New Jerusalem was a place where “God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev. 21:3). John Winthrop, Joseph Dylkes, Ann Lee, and others all believed, in various ways, that Zion was the habitation for the presence of the Almighty (see Ps. 132). In January 1834, just before Jackson County was abandoned by the Saints, Joseph Smith had prayed, “That the Lord would deliver Zion, and gather in his scattered people, to possess it in peace . . . And finally, that God in the name of Jesus would gather his elect speedily, and unveil his face that his saints might behold his glory and dwell with him; Amen.”²⁷

The differences and similarities between the Latter-day Saint concept of Zion/New Jerusalem and other contemporary views illustrate how Joseph Smith responded to the millenarian environment of nineteenth-century America.²⁸ But it is Joseph Smith’s unique doctrines and teachings that best demonstrate his views on Zion and explain the Saints’ zeal in their quest for the city of God.

Unique LDS doctrine of Zion

A group of Latter-day Saint educators wrote, “Joseph Smith was not bound by his New England heritage. In his lifetime he introduced gospel doctrines and ordinances that directly opposed his Puritan background, but exceeded any previous theological formulation of any other religious leader in their scope and clarity.”²⁹ Since the five genuinely original

²⁶ See HC 5:423.

²⁷ Joseph Smith, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, Dean C. Jessee, comp. and ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984), 26.

²⁸ See *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 15.

²⁹ *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 26.

contributions of the Prophet to the idea of Zion in America have already been discussed at length in Chapter Five, I will only briefly summarize them here.

First, from the angel Moroni and from the words of Jesus in the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith and the rest of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints “found a key to the holy prophets.”³⁰ This key was demonstrated when Joseph Smith read the 87th Psalm as part of the dedication ceremony for the temple site in Independence. This psalm includes such phrases as “The Lord loveth the gates of Zion . . . Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God . . . and the Highest Himself shall establish her.”³¹ The Saints read most of the references to Zion in the Old and New Testaments as meaning, either literally or typologically, the latter-day New Jerusalem to be built on the American continent. Previous generations arrived at this conclusion by complicated biblical exegesis. Joseph the Prophet claimed such by divine authority and appointment.

Second, by revelation Joseph Smith learned of Enoch’s Zion, which served as the great prototype for the latter-day Zion. Many of those who wanted to build Zion in America gave up in despair, saying that the human race was too depraved and too fallen to succeed at such a glorious task. Latter-day Saints believed in a glorious and miraculous reunion between the Zion they would build and Enoch’s Zion. Enoch’s Zion would be the Zion coming down from heaven referred to by John in Revelation 21 (see Moses 7:62-64).

Not only did the Saints gain one ancient precedent for Zion, but they also learned of a second Zion that had been established on the American continent shortly after Christ’s ministry among its ancient inhabitants. In the mouth of two witnesses, the reality of Zion had

³⁰ See Chapter Five, p. 109.

³¹ See HC 1:199, August 3, 1831.

been attested. It could be done. Not only that, but it seemed that all the former ages were pointing to their generation, in which all the types and shadows of the past would be fulfilled.

Those who accepted the Book of Mormon also believed that the establishment of their Zion, their New Jerusalem, had been prophesied upon this continent thousands of years earlier by a prophet named Ether. He had explained that the old Jerusalem in the Holy Land could not be the New Jerusalem spoken of by Enoch (see Ether 13:2-10). Faith in the Book of Mormon led inescapably to the conclusion that the New Jerusalem must be built upon the American continent.

Finally, the Book of Mormon, believed by Latter-day Saints to be “the most correct of any book on earth,” contains the most compelling reason of all for building New Jerusalem upon the American continent: Jesus Christ had prophesied that it would happen. He said that the restored remnant of Jacob (the “Lamanites” and other Saints) and the Gentiles would collaborate to “build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem . . . And then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I also will be in the midst” (3 Ne. 21:23, 25). No higher authority could confirm their divine mission and no more grand purpose could motivate them to action.

Inspired by these bold declarations, it is no wonder that Thomas McGowan acknowledged members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as “the best examples” of the aspiration to build Zion/New Jerusalem in America.³² And it is no wonder that Joseph Smith, the mouthpiece of the Lord for the Latter-day Saints, wrote in this bold declaration:

³² See Thomas McGowan, “Mormon Millennialism,” in M. Darrol Bryant and Donald W. Dayton, eds., *The Coming Kingdom: Essays in American Millennialism and Eschatology* (New York: International Religious Foundation, Inc., 1983), 151-152.

The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; it is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; they have looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; and fired with heavenly and joyful anticipations they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day; but they died without the sight; we are the favored people that God has made choice of to bring about the Latter-day glory; it is left for us to see, participate in and help to roll forward the Latter-day glory, "the dispensation of the fullness of times, when God will gather together all things that are in heaven, and all things that are upon the earth, "even in one," when the Saints of God will be gathered in one from every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue, when the Jews will be gathered together into one, the wicked will also be gathered together to be destroyed, as spoken of by the prophets; the Spirit of God will also dwell with His people, and be withdrawn from the rest of the nations, and all things whether in heaven or on earth will be in one, even in Christ. The heavenly Priesthood will unite with the earthly, to bring about those great purposes; and whilst we are thus united in the one common cause, to roll forth the kingdom of God, the heavenly Priesthood are not idle spectators, the Spirit of God will be showered down from above, and it will dwell in our midst. The blessings of the Most High will rest upon our tabernacles, and our name will be handed down to future ages; our children will rise up and call us blessed; and generations yet unborn will dwell with peculiar delight upon the scenes that we have passed through, the privations that we have endured; the untiring zeal that we have manifested; the all but insurmountable difficulties that we have overcome in laying the foundation of a work that brought about the glory and blessing which they will realize; a work that God and angels have contemplated with delight for generations past; that fired the souls of the ancient patriarchs and prophets; a work that is destined to bring about the destruction of the powers of darkness, the renovation of the earth, the glory of God, and the salvation of the human family.³³

³³ HC 4:609-610, May 2, 1842.

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