

City, Community, and Purity: Mormonism's Evolution of Zionism and Place

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Place is fundamental to society's conception of community, both secular and religious. This paper examines and contrasts two such communities, Judaism and Mormonism, in the context of political and religious Zionism. It first introduces and explores communities of place in political theory in general. Jewish Zionism, a political and religious movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the role that place has played in this movement, are briefly examined. The concept of Zion within Mormon theology is then discussed, tracing its evolution within Mormonism of being, in turn, a literal city and theocratic nation-state, a community of like-minded believers, and personal spiritual purity. Finally, the adherent changes in the concept of place within Mormon community are outlined, and reasons for these changes are proposed.

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; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.

10th Article of Faith, March 1842¹

I know now that the place of safety in this world is not in any given place; it doesn't make so much difference where we live; but the all-important thing is how we live, and I have found that the security can come to Israel only when they keep the commandments....

Harold B. Lee, April 1943²

INTRODUCTION

Religious communities have traditionally placed a great emphasis on place as an element of the community itself. This has sometimes been evidenced in the building of holy shrines or places of worship, the designation of certain land as sacred, or in gathering regularly or permanently as a body of like-minded believers. These components are apparent in aspects of Zionism—generally defined as a quest by Jews to “establish a homeland, or nation-state...in Israel” (Ball and Dagger 2002, 182). But the quest for Zion has also been evidenced—whether implicitly or explicitly—in strands of other religious traditions. Zion has played prominently in the theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints³, and the pursuit of Zion among the Mormon faithful has become its own unique form of Zionism. Zion, its mythos, and its development in LDS theology have

had a profound effect on how place in, and its essentiality to, Mormon community has evolved.

This paper proposes to examine Mormon Zionism and how its developing emphasis within the Mormon tradition has affected community of place within Mormonism; it will attempt to look at the ways in which a changing concept of Zion has influenced the larger concept of place for Mormons. It suggests that in order to accommodate Zion's evolution, Mormons' sense of community of place has been forced to also change. It will first look at communities of place, and position Mormons in context by looking at Jewish Zionism in general. Next, this paper will attempt to trace how the original conceptions of Zion within Mormonism have evolved into modern conceptions. Finally, it will examine how the definition and importance of place to Mormon community has evolved as a result of changes in conceptions of Zion. It will be argued that one can see a shift in emphasis from the “bonding” of early Mormon community to current admonitions toward a more “bridging” Mormon community today (Putnam 2001, 22). Possible motives for developments in Mormon Zionism will also be discussed.

¹In *History of the Church*. Vol. 4. 535-41.

²*Conference Report*, April 1943, 129. Quoted in Millet 1985, 228.

³Commonly called the “Mormon” or “LDS” Church; adherents are regularly referred to as “Mormons,” “LDS,” or “Saints.”

COMMUNITIES OF PLACE IN POLITICAL THEORY

Traditionally, place has been fundamental to society's conception of community. The ancient Greek city-state, or *polis*, was an urban center, the fundamental job of which was to govern its surrounding rural areas. The *polis* was notable for its small size, which allowed a form of participatory government to flourish (Ball and Dagger 2002, 20-21). Pericles saw the self-interested and publicly disengaged individual in Athenian society as "useless" (2002, 18), pointing out that one can contribute to the benefit of the polis "whatever be the obscurity of his condition" (2002, 17). Aristotle spoke of the virtues of a participatory polity that would govern in the interest of the common good. Participation was important because men "meet together," and "a feast to which many contribute is better than a dinner provided out of a single purse" (Aristotle 2002, 22). Athenians were seen as capable of self-governance when they could find the time to gather in assembly and vote directly upon policy (Ball and Dagger 2002, 21). To these early thinkers, community, participation, and place were inseparably intertwined in the ideal community.

For John Locke and Jean-Jacque Rousseau, certain conditions needed to be met before community or society could exist. One of these conditions, said Locke, was for men to agree "together mutually to enter into one community, and make one body politic" (1994, 7); and, said Rousseau, for every member of a community, when it is created, to give "himself to it as he then is, together with all his resources, of which the goods he possesses are part" (1994, 60). Central to community, then, are the elements of physically coming together and having public possessions, lands, or "community goods" (1994, 60).

We further see the centrality of place to community in the political thought of Edmund Burke and Alexis de Tocqueville. In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke praised the role of the "little platoons" in society—family, neighborhood, church, and voluntary associations—organizations that required localized membership and participation. These platoons are communities of place that endear citizens to their society (Burke 2002, 139-45). In his work *Democracy in America*, de Tocqueville admired two aspects of American democracy that helped provide an "equality of conditions" (2002, 39): the New England town meeting and jury duty. These institutions provided opportunity for all citizens to "participate directly in local government," and enjoy a "shared responsibility" (Ball and Dagger 2002, 36).

Communities of place have recently been attacked by some critics as being inadequate in describing current trends in community and political thought. Scholars like Friedman argue against the "situated self," advanced by communitarians like Sandel (1996, 3-24) and others, in favor of a more "transcendental" individual. Friedman contends that most communitarian notions of communities of place tend to favor

"morally troubling politics of gender" (1995, 194). By advocating communities of place, Friedman maintains, one's identity is defined by the community and not by the individual (1995, 197). She prefers instead to promote "communities of choice" as an alternative to supplement, if not entirely displace, traditional communities of place (Friedman 1995, 197). This notion of choice in community and self actualization is described by other researchers as the "therapeutic self" (Bellah, et al. 1996, 127). In emphasizing choice, however, this critique fails to recognize that humans are fundamentally social, and are unable to *not* define themselves in some way by the communities into which they are originally embedded.

JEWISH ZIONISM AND COMMUNITY OF PLACE

It is clear that though we are a distinct people, we are a non-possessing one; that though we are spread all over the world, we are without a centralised force; that though we are everywhere prominent, we are nowhere in the majority; that though we are governed by every people and are loyal to every government, we possess no government of our own.

J. de Hass⁴

Jewish Zionism was largely a political movement and, to a lesser extent, a religious one. Although it has its modern roots in the late nineteenth century, the movement itself can trace its traditional roots back even farther. The name Zion first appears in the biblical account of David's conquest of Jerusalem in 1000 BC (2 Sam. 5:6-10). "Zion" referred to a stronghold built on a hill in Jerusalem called Mount Zion. In time, Jerusalem became David's capitol city, and Mount Zion became home to King Solomon's temple. As this temple came to house the Israelites' Ark of the Covenant and, in consequence, symbolically house the Hebrew God Jehovah, Mount Zion became a mythically holy place for Israel. Zion and Jerusalem eventually became completely synonymous place names, with Zion thereby becoming an entire religious capital. The city was destroyed by the Assyrians in the first century AD, and the Jewish people were subsequently displaced (Henrie 1972, 51-52).

While an initial Zionist theory had been formulated in principle in 1882 (de Hass 1901, 48), it was not until 1897, when Theodore Herzl organized the World Zionist Conference in Basle, Switzerland, that a formal Zionist movement was initiated (Allison 1996). Proponents of the Zionist movement at the turn of the century touted "Zionism as a complete theory of Jewish life" (de Hass 1901, 3). The movement addressed three elements of Jewish strife, namely: "that the political position of the Jews tends to become worse, that there is a decline in religiosity, and that every new [government and social] restriction lowers the economic position of the Jews" (de Hass 1901, 23).

⁴In *Zionism: Jewish Needs & Jewish Ideals*. 35.

J. de Hass articulated the Zionist position regarding the above-mentioned elements. The quest for a Jewish nation and identity was in response to the intense and growing anti-Semitism experienced by Jews throughout Europe and Russia (de Hass 1901, 4-9). The need to preserve religious and cultural tradition stemmed from a general lack of interest in the Jewish faith by younger generations. He pointed to increasing cultural assimilation and the declining attendance at synagogues as evidence that Jews were being lost to Christianity, non-religion, and “nothingism” (de Hass 1901, 11-13). Zionism would serve to bring a newfound cohesion for Jewish religion and tradition. Additionally, Jews in Europe were forced to live in poverty as persecution and the industrial revolution left many of them without work (de Hass 1901, 19-20). Overall, though, de Hass framed Zionism as a movement to gather a people who had become decentralized and disenfranchised (de Hass 1901, 35).

The Messianic element of Zionism—the belief that the re-establishment of Zion is necessary before the Advent of the Messiah who will bring Israel out of bondage—was arguably a secondary facet to the overall push for a Jewish nation-state. For example, Allison states that the exact place for a Jewish nation, Palestine, was not “unquestioned” at the beginning of the movement (Allison 1996). In fact, de Hass’s treatise on Zionism mentions the Messianic prophecies regarding Palestine only after the plight of the Jews is outlined in terms of their political, economic, and religious well-being. He mentions both Canada and the United States as possible gathering locations “in case of a possible emergency,” but anti-Semitism’s far-reaching effects are cited as reasons why these options are less-desirable (de Hass 1901, 26). Chaim Weizmann, later Israel’s first president, was instrumental in making Palestine the preferred choice, and this was encouraged by Britain’s Balfour Declaration in 1917 (Allison 1996).

The purpose for the Jews’ Zionist movement was not so much that Zion needed to be reclaimed, but that Israel needed a homeland, a gathering place, a nation. The biblical Zion—Jerusalem—seemed to be a convenient place for a Jewish nation-state, dovetailing perfectly with the secondary religious objectives of the movement. This community of place would be a land of political freedom and empowerment for the Jewish people, where they could renew and maintain their traditions and religion as a cohesive group, and where poverty would be abolished and memories of the European ghettos would be stamped out.

Jews were encouraged to relocate to Palestine from the time of the first Zionist Conference, and small groups continued to emigrate for decades. Allison points to the intense persecution and extermination of Jews during World War II as finally legitimizing Jews’ need for a nation-state, “the only place where Jews might feel safe from persecution” (Allison 1996). The Zionists’ were rewarded with just that in 1948 when Israel was officially formed and all Jews were granted the right to emigrate if they so desired. Since this time, the

Zionist movement can be seen as supporting the continued existence of a sovereign Jewish nation. And just as the reasons for returning to Palestine varied, so does the current ideological spectrum of those who today espouse Zionism: both religious and secular Zionists exist, as well as capitalist and socialist ones (Allison 1996). But common to all these Zionists is the *holy land* where their community is now based.

The idea of sacred place being central to a community of religious believers is not exclusive to Judaism. Strands of “Zionist” tendencies are evident in many religious faiths. Muslims are required by a tenet of belief to make the hajj to Mecca, the faith’s holiest city, at least once in their lifetime. Henrie describes how “the Puritans had appreciated Massachusetts and Connecticut as a divinely established ‘promised land,’ as a base for the cleansing of the world,” but notes that this sect’s perception of New England as such a place died out when they did (1972, 1). United States history has also seen millennialist sects like the Anabaptists and Millerites who believe in the institution of a Christian Zion. But it is the Mormons who stand out as having arguably been the “most literal in their treatment of the Zion concept in connection with Christianity” (Henrie 1972, 52).

MORMON ZIONISM: AN EVOLUTION

The only way to really sift through and understand the varying Mormon conceptions of Zion is to recognize that obviously more than one idea of Zion was and has been entertained over the years at the same time. While one facet was the object of focus, others were not necessarily discarded, but rather placed on a shelf temporarily for later use and application.

Robert L. Millet⁵

The Mormon conception of Zion, and Mormonism’s quest to establish Zion as a community of place, both parallels and deviates from the Jewish experience. Olsen maintains that from its earliest inception, the LDS faith has embraced some form of Zionism (qtd. in Millet 1985, 32). For instance, the LDS book of scripture the *Book of Mormon* was published in 1830, the same year that the Church was officially organized. Disregarding the book’s several passages that quote Isaiah with reference to Zion, we find that it also contains several original mentions of the concept. Millet notes that overall, Zion is “seen to be much broader than the Old Testament city of Jerusalem” (1985, 25). For instance, he states that several passages seem to describe a community or society of believers, while another designates “Zion as a place: the land of America” (1985, 25).

Reinforcing Smith’s vision of Zion, and its prominence in Mormon theology and practice, is the account of the City of Enoch or Zion found in Mormon scripture (Arrington, Fox, and May 1976, 20). Not long after the publication of the

⁵In “The Development of the Concept of Zion in Mormon Theology.” 246-7.

Book of Mormon, Smith proceeded with an “inspired translation” of the Bible in June, 1830. This involved making “corrections” to the texts of the Old and New Testaments solely by inspired guidance, and without the aid of original texts (Smith 1978, 98-101; 131-39). In the commencement of this work, the Book of Moses, now contained in the LDS book of scripture the *Pearl of Great Price*, was revealed to the Mormon prophet. Within this book, Smith read the narrative of the biblical prophet Enoch, whose ministry was to gather a people who would follow God’s laws:

And the Lord called [Enoch’s] people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.... And it came to pass in his days that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion. (Moses 7:18-19)

Further in the account, the Lord shows Enoch a vision of the latter-day Church:

“...[A]nd righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may...be looking for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. (Moses 7:62)

As the narrative continues, Enoch is then told that his city of Zion will be taken from the earth and its citizens will dwell with God, awaiting the time when the latter-day Zion will also be lifted from the earth. This episode is to be followed by a millennium of peace and Christ personally ruling among mankind.

Here Smith and the Church are given a unique conception of Zion: not only is it a city, it is also a community of Saints living a social order in the prototype of Enoch’s righteous followers. An obvious element of the latter-day Zion conception is that when this community of place is established, its citizens will be received into heaven, ushering in the Second Coming of Christ and the onset of his millennial reign. In effect, Smith now had a blueprint for the perfect community and specifications for speeding the Lord’s return. In 1832, Smith was told by revelation that the Lord had designated Jackson County, Missouri, as the place where the latter-day Zion was to be built by his people (*Doctrine and Covenants*⁶ 84:2-4), and subsequently Smith’s followers started to gather there with designs to organize a Zion society and build a holy city.

An additional conception of Zion was articulated in a revelation received by Smith in August of 1833. Amidst harsh persecution, the Saints in Jackson County had been forced to sign an agreement that they would vacate their

property, and with it their hopes of building the city of Zion there at that time. The revelation stated in part:

And the nations of the earth...shall say: Surely Zion is the city of our God, and surely Zion cannot fall, neither be moved out of her place.... Therefore, verily, thus saith the Lord, let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion—the pure in heart; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn. (D&C 97:19, 21)

This final conception of Zion brings us to three understandings of Zion that are evident in Mormon Zionism: “(1) Zion as a place, or specific geographical location; (2) Zion as a community of the saints; and (3) Zion as an internalized spiritual state” (Millet 1985, 1). As we examine how each of these concepts of Zion has been alternately emphasized, we also see how the role of place has been modified within the Mormon community.

ORIGINAL EMPHASIS

Both Smith and his immediate successor, Brigham Young, emphasized Zion as a place, a city of holiness preparing the earth for the Second Advent of Christ. A major part of this undertaking was the admonition to “gather out [the] elect from the four quarters of the earth,” and collect them in the city of Zion (Moses 7:62). Consequently, the Church sent out missionaries to find the “elect” and gather them with the Saints in a central location. This “central place” (Olsen 2002, 19) changed alternately from Kirtland, Ohio, to Jackson County, Missouri, and then to Nauvoo, Illinois. After the Saints were expelled from Nauvoo, they sought a sacred homeland in the Western United States—seeking, as Henrie says, “a place of divine destiny, suitable for a people of destiny” (1972, 76). Henrie’s research discovered that most Mormons feel that Utah is sacred because it was the “land of promise for the Mormon Pioneers” (1972, 77). “Utah,” he claims, “became Zion through hard work and constant rhetoric” (Henrie 1972, 76).

Gathering the Saints remained a “suggestion” under Smith. Less than a third of the 17,849 initial European converts during Smith’s presidency left their homes for Nauvoo (Millet 1985, 224-25). But after the Church founder’s assassination in 1844, “The suggestion to gather became fixed as a duty and a commandment during the administration of Brigham Young” (Millet 1985, 224-25). Arrington and Bitton found that between 1846 and 1887, the years of Brigham Young’s leadership, the number of European converts who emigrated to the Utah Zion totaled 85,000 (qtd. in Millet 1985, 224-25). By focusing on the importance of Zion as a city, and by extension a gathering place, living with other Saints in the central Zion also became important to Church members.

Young, however, also “believed strongly in social equality” (Arrington et. al. 1976, 89), and Zion’s promise of social and economic parity struck a chord with the Mormon Church’s new president. Perhaps as a result of Young’s

⁶The *Doctrine and Covenants* is a book of Mormon scripture containing a collection of divine revelations received through Joseph Smith and other latter-day Mormon prophets, “for the restoration of (God’s) holy work and the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth...” (*Doctrine and Covenants*: Explanatory Introduction). Hereafter cited as D&C.

attempts to bring out the social conception of Mormon Zionism among the Saints upon their arrival in the state of Deseret, Bellah commented:

...one of the things that links the early Puritans in Massachusetts and the Mormons through much of their history has been the fact that they had a strongly social vision. America is supposed to be the land of radical individualism, and indeed it is. Both Puritans and Mormons have had profound respect for the God-given autonomy of the individual. But neither the Puritans nor Mormonism ... have ever taken the isolated individual as the final good. (1978, 4-5)

Smith had revealed specific aspects of the “Order of Enoch” or “United Order”—the social and economic structure adhered to by those within the Zion community—in 1831, but his previous attempts at its implementation among church members had failed (Arrington et al. 1976, 2-7). Young proceeded to take steps toward reintroducing the United Order among the Saints as early as the 1850s, by promoting deeds of consecration among the church membership, but few participated (Arrington et al. 1976, 63; 78). This movement, however, set the stage for the creation of Zion’s Cooperative Mercantile Institution, and the Brigham City Cooperative, developments that Arrington, Fox, and May refer to as “stepping stones to the United Order” (1976, 111).

After experiencing some limited success with the previous two endeavors, Young was finally willing to institute the United Order among groups of Saints assigned to settle new communities expressly for this purpose in the 1870s. Young felt strongly that the ideal United Order was like a “well-regulated family,” an organization where all labored fairly, each received according to his needs, and the welfare of the group was paramount (Arrington et al. 1976, 203). In short, and in accordance with revealed scripture, members of the Order would be “of one heart and one mind,” “[dwell] in righteousness,” and have “no poor among them.”

The United Order served to localize the community even further. While individuals would have their own sleeping quarters and residences, Young’s vision was for all social experiences throughout the day to be shared among the members of the community (Arrington et al. 1976, 203). Common areas like the dining room and the kitchen would be essential to the community and the social interactions of its members. Under Young’s ideal, place would become extremely, fundamentally central to the concept of Zion. United Order settlements proliferated across the territory, but the majority of them were soon fraught with problems. Even though some of the United Orders lasted for a decade or more, most collapsed within their first year of existence, and none survived into the twentieth-century (Arrington et al. 1976, 7).

TRANSITIONAL EMPHASIS

The biggest transitions in Mormon Zionism started almost immediately upon Young’s death in the late nineteenth-century. By 1890, the Church had begun to find itself under

increasing political and social pressure, due to both its practice of “plural marriage” and large-scale emigration from Europe. The United States Supreme Court had delivered a double blow to the Church with its decisions in *Reynolds v. U.S.* (1879), ruling that the Church’s common practice of polygamy was not protected by the First Amendment’s guarantee of free exercise of religion (Fisher 2003, 589); and *Davis v. Beason* (1890), ruling in favor of an Idaho law that disenfranchised voters who “advocated or practiced plural marriage or belonged to an organization that did” (Hall 1999, 73). These rulings reflected a wider social sentiment that polygamy “constituted the abuse of women..., nurtur[ing] rape, incest, and other crimes against women” (Gordon 2003, 21). Polygamy as a practice was officially discontinued by the Church in 1890 (D&C: Official Declaration—1).

Almost as troubling for the Church was the continuing influx into Utah of new converts from abroad. Many would sell their property in their native lands in order to heed the “commandment” to gather to the Salt Lake Zion, and subsequently arrive destitute in Utah. U.S. government emigration officials, as well the Utah Saints whose job it was to care for the newest Mormons in their midst, were fast tiring of the steady stream of bodies and increased work (Millet 1985, 226). In addition to changing their stance on polygamy, in 1890 Mormon leaders also started changing the emphasis of what it meant to “gather to Zion.” In that year, Mormon Apostle George Q. Cannon told the *New York Times* that while Mormon missionaries did indeed make converts abroad, he assured the paper that “instead of inducing them to come to this country, we really urge our missionaries to dissuade them in any way they can” (qtd. in Millet 1985, 226). In the 1898 General Conference of the Church, Cannon again commented on the situation, suggesting that new converts “in the various lands where they embrace the gospel [should] remain quiet for a while; to not be anxious to break up their homes to gather to Zion” (qtd. in Millet 1985, 226). The transition seemed to be complete by the end of the first decade after the turn of the century. In a 1911 statement from the Church’s First Presidency, leaders acknowledged that while Zion is to be built on the American continent, gathering to America was not obligatory or even recommended. Rather, in order to assist the church in proselyting efforts, all members were encouraged to help form permanent congregations in their native lands (qtd. in Millet 1985, 227).

Millet further points to a shift in doctrinal emphasis regarding Zion around this time as well (1985, 276). He notes sermons from Young’s administration which emphasized to Saints the necessity of living worthy to “have Zion within them,” and being “pure in heart.” This doctrinal shift in emphasis, from the place aspect to the spiritual aspect of Zion, also coincided with the first temples being dedicated outside the U.S., and the purchase of permanent missionary headquarters in foreign countries. As the Church was encouraging its members to turn inward, it was busy turning outward.

MODERN EMPHASIS

Modern changes in Mormon Zionism have continued along the same path set in motion by Church administrators about a century ago. Notable is the emphasis upon a decentralized church, one with strong “stakes of Zion” (Lee 1973, 2) in many parts of the world. Indeed, as of December 31, 2004, the Church reported membership at over 12.25 million members, most of who live outside the United States (“Statistical Report, 2004” 2005.). In order to produce this worldwide presence, the Church has emphasized a regional aspect of Zion, and its conception as a personal spiritual place.

Archetypal of the regionalizing of Mormon Zionism is an address delivered by Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie in August, 1972. Speaking in Mexico City at an “area conference” of the Church—a then-new conference format that brought a small delegation of general church authorities to large congregations of Saints outside Utah—McConkie echoed previous Church sentiments that deemphasized the notion of a central gathering place for the Mormon faithful.

The place of gathering for the Mexican Saints is in Mexico; the place of gathering for the Guatemalan Saints is in Guatemala; the place of gathering for the Brazilian Saints is in Brazil; and so it goes throughout the length and breadth of the whole earth. Japan is for the Japanese; Korea is for the Koreans; Australia is for the Australians; every nation is the gathering place for its own people. (qtd. in Lee 1973, 2)

No longer were Church members “discouraged” from gathering to the American Zion, but they were now told that their native lands were Zion itself. This conception was reinforced by the Church’s above-mentioned area conferences, the building of temples outside both Utah and the United States, and in a continuing emphasis on missionary and proselyting efforts.

Gone are the General Conference addresses by LDS Church leaders addressing the “actual, severe labor” required to build up the city of Zion (Young 1997, 111). In their stead are sermons outlining how the faithful disciple can become “pure in heart.” For instance, one recent Church president, Spencer W. Kimball, addressed his followers regarding “three fundamental things we must do if we are to ‘bring again Zion’” (1985, 3). These included eliminating personal selfishness, cooperating and working harmoniously together, and offering God a “broken heart and contrite spirit,” ultimately in pursuit of building Zion within each individual Church member (Kimball 1985, 3). The tenor and scope of current LDS dialogue regarding Zion reflects this fundamental shift from city building to spirit building.

MORMON ZIONISM AND COMMUNITY OF PLACE

[Religious] commitment is most adequate when it is grounded in the traditions of a particular community and at the same time relates constructively both to other communities and to the broader society.

George Rupp⁷

As Mormon conceptions of their Zion have shifted in emphasis during the years since 1830, so too has the way that Mormons view place as an essential characteristic of Zion. As we have seen, while the conceptions of Zion as a city and a society were emphasized within the Church, Mormons’ community of place was a common, center location. All Saints were encouraged to gather together with the true believers wherever doctrine or circumstance dictated the Church should establish its base. Millet identifies some practical reasons for the Church to emphasize gathering in conjunction with building Zion: to establish a common sense of identity; to find strength in numbers; to escape both spiritual and apocalyptic perils; and to prepare to build the New Jerusalem (1985, 223-24). This conception of place, though, promulgated a type of community referred to by Putnam as “bonding” communities (2001, 22). These tend to remain close-knit, exclusive communities that are suspicious of outsiders. Early Mormons, like other millennialist sects of their time, promulgated norms and practices that brought community members closer together at the expense of relating well with those outside the faith. A few examples: Mormons developed the practice of referring to non-Mormons as “Gentiles,” their early United Order experiments were greeted with suspicion by the locals in Missouri, and the sacred rituals and ordinances performed in their temples were rumored to include loyalty oaths carrying a penalty of death.

Yet place itself has not lessened in importance for the modern Mormon community’s Zionism. The definition of place has simply adjusted to meet the current Church’s objectives. The stressing of personal righteousness among the LDS population brings with it a different sense of place and gathering from the early Mormons. For instance, Mormons have long been encouraged to “stand in holy places” (D&C 45:32). In modern times, these places have alternately been interpreted to mean anywhere from LDS temples and meetinghouses, to the home and metaphysical personal righteousness. With the proliferation of Mormon temples being built throughout the world⁸, members are encouraged to gather to these edifices for an “endowment” of knowledge and protection from God (D&C 38:38). Similarly, weekly worship services act as a regular gathering place. This is especially true as semi-annual worldwide General Conferences, beamed to meetinghouses around the world by satellite, allow church members to collectively gather in groups in various locations and receive the same theological instruction from Church leaders. The entire Church effectively gathers in spirit as members participate simultaneously in the broadcast. But a much emphasized local gathering is directed to the home and family⁹. Beginning in 1915, Saints were encouraged to set aside Monday evenings each week for a “Family Home

⁷ In *Commitment and Community*. vii.

⁸ As of December 2004, 119 LDS temples were in operation worldwide, with at least 10 more in various stages of planning or construction (“Statistical Report, 2004” 2005).

Evening”: a night for family gospel instruction, discussion, and recreation (Wirthlin 1993, 68). Recently, Mormon leadership has further promoted family through encouraging lay ecclesiastical leaders to hold church-related meetings on fewer evenings, and by issuing an official proclamation that affirms the sanctity of family life and commitments.

In order to encourage their members to gather regionally rather than centrally, Church leaders have needed to promote a more “bridging,” inclusive approach to community than they had traditionally done (Putnam 2001, 22). In order to assist the stated proselyting efforts of the church, leaders have started to preach a gospel of inclusiveness to Mormons. LDS Apostle M. Russell Ballard recently sermonized that Mormons should lead “loving, kind, tolerant, and benevolent” lives, especially exhibiting these characteristics toward those in their communities not of their faith. He proposed that Mormons eschew terminology like “non-Mormon” and “nonmember” from their lexicon when referring to those of another or no religious group. “If a collective description is needed,” he counseled, “then ‘neighbors’ seems to work well in most cases” (Ballard 2001, 35). Mormon leaders seem keenly interested in broadening the Church’s appeal to outsiders, building bridges in communities, and helping its members create “an atmosphere of courtesy, respect, and civility” in their communities (Ballard 2001, 35). Undoubtedly, proselyting requires both a friendly congregation and a bridging, inclusive organization.

CONCLUSIONS

Indeed, the most resilient communities are those which are constantly redefining [themselves] in changing historical circumstances. . . . To work most successfully for the endurance of community, [its ceremonies, icons, and other cultural tools] ought to be defined in terms of long-term goals and yet should be flexible enough to allow for short-term modifications.

Todd Goodsell⁹

Zion, by definition, is a community of place that has prominence in several religious traditions. The Jews of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who prescribed to the Zionist movement did so primarily for political reasons. They were seeking to reclaim a national identity, halt Jewish cultural assimilation, and promote economic stability for their people. This was largely expressed in the need for a Jewish nation-state, and religious motives—namely the Advent of the Messiah—were secondary. Mormon Zionism of the same period, on the other hand, was fueled by motives that were

equal parts political—the establishment of the city of Zion, a theocratic nation-state—and religious—instituting a divinely revealed social and economic order that would usher in the Second Coming of Christ. Whereas Jewish Zionism today is mainly seen as continued political support for the nation of Israel (Allison 1996), Mormon Zionism transformed over the course of 175 years from its originally emphasized conception to its modern-day emphasis: a quest for both a regionalized and a spiritual Zion. The notion of place has consequently changed for the Mormon community, as a central gathering place has been deemphasized in favor of a regional gathering. The LDS church has been transforming from embracing an exclusive, bonding type of community, to a more tolerant, bridging type.

In examining the LDS Church’s conceptions of Zion—Zion as a city, Zion as an egalitarian society, and Zion as personal purity—we can see that these three ideals are intertwined. In order for the city of Zion to be built, there must first exist a community of the pure in heart: Mormons who live in a social order that is “of one heart and one mind,” keeps God commandments, and has all things common among its participants (Moses 7:18). In order to enter this utopian society of equality and cooperation, though, one must be “pure in heart” oneself. “Living under ideal institutions is not, in the Mormon view, an experience that perfects man. Rather, it is an evidence that man has achieved perfection” (Arrington et. al. 1976, 8).

Failed attempts by the Saints to build the city of Zion and to create Zion social communities in the nineteenth century likely led to the modern Church’s emphasis of preparing a “Zion people” through encouraging them to become “pure in heart.” Political and social pressures in the late nineteenth century, specifically the large-scale emigration of Mormon converts from Europe and polygamy, also served to make the establishment of a theocratic city of Zion a less-likely reality. The Mormon Church has also had aims of massive proselyting efforts and worldwide expansion. These motives are legitimately grounded: LDS theology refers to Zion as an ensign, or banner, to the world. When lifted up, all nations will run to it and the subsequent spate of righteousness will usher in the millennial reign of Christ (Millet 1985, 213-19). The world can see the ensign more clearly and reach it more easily, it is thought, if Zion covers the earth.

The conception of Zion which is now primarily emphasized in the LDS Church is the quest for personal spiritual preparation, and by extension an understanding of the Zion community of place being a regionalized gathering. While most Mormons are content to strive to build Zion inside themselves, within their homes, and in their local communities through proselyting and regularly gathering for worship and instruction, the ultimate goal of building the “City of Holiness,” and living in her egalitarian social and economic order, is not lost entirely from their consciousness¹¹. Whether as a central city, or as a personal pursuit of righteousness and

⁹ Mormon Church leaders maintain that the home and the LDS temple are places of paramount holiness. According to the *LDS Bible Dictionary*, “(The temple) is the most holy of any place of worship on the earth. Only the home can compare with the temple in sacredness” (“Temple” 1980, 781).

¹⁰ In “Maintaining Solidarity: A Look Back at the Mormon Vilalge.” 373.

purity, Zionism continues to play prominently in Mormon communities of place.

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¹¹ Henrie's research found that American Mormons rank the "future Jackson County" as the most sacred place in Mormondom, ahead of Utah, the Holy Land, and their own communities (1972, 67). This would suggest that the long-term goal of building the latter-day Zion is more significant to the LDS faithful than the interim goal of regional and personal Zionism.