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Making Space for the Mormons

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LEONARD J. ARRINGTON
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MAKING SPACE
FOR
THE MORMONS

by

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MAKING SPACE FOR THE MORMONS

The organizers of this event are to be commended for initiating a lecture series named for Leonard Arrington, and I truly hope I can do justice to the occasion. I am tempted to devote the time to Leonard himself, for though his immense talents are widely appreciated, we always feel they are not appreciated enough.

I met Leonard in 1960 when I took my first job at BYU as a new Ph.D. To my surprise one day in the fall, an envelope from Utah State appeared in the mail, and in it was a letter from Leonard welcoming me to the community of scholars in Utah. How did he know about me and why had he written from Logan to Provo? I realized eventually that he took responsibility for the entire enterprise of Mormon and Great Basin history and wanted to encourage me in the good work.

A little over a decade later he came into our lives again when he got wind of a group of Boston women's plans to write a history of women in the Church. He was there immediately with encouragement, interest, and a little subsidy to help publish *Mormon Sisters*. He won the hearts of those women, and made Claudia Bushman, the ringleader and my wife, his friend for life.

Leonard drew me into Mormon studies by proposing that I write the first volume of the projected sixteen-volume history of the Church. I had planned for years to work on Joseph Smith, but kept putting it off in favor of other projects. He persuaded me to take on the assignment and made it easy to work from Boston by sending photocopies of key documents. Later he edited and defended the work, and I dedicated *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* to Leonard because it is his book as well as mine. Scores of authors could tell similar stories, and scores of books would not have been written

without him. He is truly the patriarch of Mormon studies in our generation.

Now I am returning to Joseph Smith at the suggestion of Ron Esplin, Leonard's successor at the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute. The Institute's staff saw the need for a biography that would both develop Joseph Smith's religious thought and give more credence to his spiritual influence on his followers, and they asked me to take on the assignment.

Although I am just starting the research and have little to report so far, I want to give you an idea of my general perspective. I am writing a cultural biography of Joseph Smith that will be akin to the studies of literary scholars who situate their texts, as they say, in the culture of a period. A cultural biography makes a greater effort than usual to relate the subject's thought to the thinking in his larger environment. I would like to know where Joseph stood in relation to contemporary theologians, reformers, and preachers. How do his ideas of Israel, priesthood, Zion, temples, riches, history, and so forth compare to the ideas of his time?

This approach may seem out of place for a believing Latter-day Saint like myself, because it sounds like the method of historicist scholars who want to explain away Joseph Smith's revelations. People like John Brooke or Fawn Brodie search contemporary sources for references to Melchizedek or baptism for the dead or eternal marriage or Enoch to show that Joseph got his ideas from his environment and that Mormonism came about through natural historical processes rather than by divine intervention as Mormons believe.

My method is similar, but my purposes are different. I want to reconstruct the world around Joseph Smith just as the historicists do, but in order to understand him, not to find historical sources for the revelations. How are we to see and appreciate this many-faceted man without putting him in context? We define ourselves by comparison to others who are the same or different, and people from the past are understood in the same way. On the principle that a fish is the last one to discover water, I think Mormons themselves will not accurately perceive Joseph Smith until he is situated in his culture.

As an example of what I mean, I want to talk tonight about space—Joseph Smith's conception of space in comparison to the spatial constructions of his contemporaries. I do not mean the outer space of cosmonauts or the inner space of meditation; I am talking about the space we see and work, build, and travel in—in short, geography.

We sometimes think of space as simply there and similar for everyone. But on second thought we know that we all shape the spaces we inhabit. Claudia and I recently moved to Pasadena, and at first everything was a confusing, undifferentiated mass of buildings and streets. Then gradually places began to stand out on the landscape—the bank, grocery store, church, copy shop, a museum or two—and having located them we lined out the best routes to each one. Now we have personal maps of Pasadena in our minds that suit the needs of our everyday routines.

Every map works much like our mental maps of Pasadena. We sometimes think a map depicts the simple truth about space; it simply tells us what is there. Actually maps work only by suppressing the truth. Each map constructs a specialized and limited picture of space. A map of the United States that told everything about the country would be useless, for it would be the United States itself. Maps have to exclude information, huge amounts of it, to be workable at all, whether the map is of Utah, Logan, this room, or this

podium. In making a map, most of what is known about each of these spaces must be left out.

This reduction of spatial reality to a limited number of lines is an act of power. Someone has to decide what matters and eliminate everything else, thereby reshaping reality. In the old days, as the geographer J. B. Harley has written, mapmaking was the “science of princes.” They drew lines to trace in their kingdoms and to give an air of reality to their territorial claims. King Lear opens with a map scene and the plot grows out of the divisions Lear makes in the kingdom. More recently, as Harley points out, maps have been the “weapons of imperialism” as much as guns or warships. “Maps were used to legitimise the reality of conquest and empire.”¹ Many of you will remember maps with the British possessions in pink, confirming the claim that the sun never sets on the British empire. The designation of Greenwich, England, as the median for time zones around the earth intimated this one nation’s control over the whole earth.

In modern times, maps reflect another kind of power, cultural power. We enter our social values onto maps. In the familiar case of the road map, we designate urban places and the routes that enable us to speed between them—leaving off trees, mountains, ethnicity, architecture, soil types, and innumerable other matters in our preoccupation with movement between cities. Other maps record other values, and were we to bring together all the maps, we would have a map not just of space but of contemporary culture. Maps and culture continually interact, the maps directing and controlling thought on the one hand, and reflecting and expressing values on the other.

It follows that a new kind of map alerts us to new values, and so we should pay attention when Joseph Smith, like other revolutionary figures, remaps space. One of his most powerful acts was to create a conception of space that governed the movement of tens of thousands of people for many decades. Were we to map Mormon space in the mid-nineteenth century, it would begin with wispy little lines originating in Scandinavian villages and the side streets of English industrial towns, and these thin lines would converge and grow darker as they approached port cities on the continent and in Britain. Then the map would show even darker sea routes from the ports to New Orleans, and then up the river to a jumping-off place where all the lines come together in a wide, dark path across the prairies and through the mountains to Salt Lake City. Then the lines would thin down again and spray like a star burst out to many sites in the Great Basin. This map was drawn after Joseph Smith died, but it was very much his creation, and during his life similar maps laid out the routes of Mormon converts to Nauvoo and the other gathering sites.

Joseph Smith turned space into a funnel that collected people from the widest possible periphery and drew them like gravity into a central point. At that center, he formed another kind of space, this one mapped with lines on paper and not just words. In 1833 Joseph and Frederick G. Williams sent a plat of the city of Zion to the saints in Jackson County. Soon after, as Mark Hamilton discovered some years ago, they followed up with a second plat that simplified the first and enlarged it to hold more blocks. The first plat had a central square for the bishop that was eliminated in the second plat, but both plats showed two central ten-acre squares with twelve temples on each one. These structures served as the “public buildings,” as the instructions on the margins called them, for the one-and-a-half-square-mile town. The temples were to serve as schools and houses of worship, and not just places for religious worship like temples today. On the

surrounding blocks that made up the bulk of the city, each family's brick or stone house stood on a half acre of land with a grove in front—planted according to individual taste, the instructions said—and gardens in back. Barns and stables lay outside the city where the farmland began. Farmers would live in the city and go out each day to work. All together the city contained 2,600 lots, and the instructions in the margins set the population at fifteen to twenty thousand. When the population reached that number, the plat instructed, "Layoff another in the same way, and so fill up the world in the last days."²

Mormon space, then, consisted of these two elements: first, the convert population streaming along the lines of gathering from all over the globe, and second, the central city of Zion where the saints settled or were distributed to similar cities plotted on the broader Zion landscape.

In preparing a plat for the city of Zion, Joseph made a modest entry into a grand tradition, the planning and building of cities. He joined an enterprise that, like map making, had been the work of princes throughout the ages. To found a city was one of the magnificent gestures of a king. When Peter the Great wanted to bring European refinement to Russia, he founded St. Petersburg in 1703, and Catherine II made it a great capital. All the European Renaissance princes looked after their cities, straightening the streets and laying out grand vistas pointing toward imposing monuments. The burning of London gave Charles II an opportunity to redo his capital city, under the direction of Christopher Wren, with those characteristic baroque streets striking through the blocks toward central monuments. When the United States laid out its capital city, Charles L'Enfant, a French engineer who had volunteered for the American revolutionary army, introduced baroque design into the United States.

In Europe the opportunities to found entirely new cities came only rarely, and even major remodeling (like London's) required that part of the old city be destroyed. America was different. Because of its abundant open space, city building was almost an everyday affair as immigrants poured across the Atlantic and new towns sprang up everywhere. In the seventeenth century, little heed was paid to design principles; Boston streets, for example, grew organically, conforming to the natural flow of topography and making no attempt at squaring the blocks. But by the time William Penn laid out Philadelphia in 1682, conscientious planning had become the norm. By Joseph Smith's day, virtually every land speculator included town sites in his scheme, each with a plat put down on paper to convince prospective buyers of the city's reality, even when it was only an imagined hope. Joseph's city of Zion was one flake in a blizzard of town plans in nineteenth-century America.³

Joseph's ideas about Zion are sometimes said to come from his native New England. His city resembles the towns of Massachusetts and Connecticut more than the fabulous New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation with its twelve pearly gates, walls of jasper, and streets of gold.⁴ Joseph toned down the extravagant decorations of the scriptural city to make the city of Zion into a farming community like the towns he knew in Vermont. In the 1830s, during the same decade when Joseph was establishing Zion, John Warner Barber, a Connecticut-born wood engraver and author, sketched some 320 New England towns and published his engravings with short histories of each town in his *Historical Collections*. Taken together, Barber's villages, following one after another through the pages of his book, appear very much like Joseph's Zion, filled up with cities

like the one Joseph and Frederick G. Williams plotted for the Jackson County saints in 1833.

But the New England comparison can only be carried so far. Joseph's city of Zion is not a replica of a New England village transported to the frontier. Zion was a city, not a village or even a town. In 1830, the largest city in the West, St. Louis, had only ten thousand inhabitants, compared to Zion's projected fifteen to twenty thousand. Only seven cities in the entire United States in 1830 had more than twenty-five thousand inhabitants.⁵ Joseph's city was larger than any city he had ever seen, save Cincinnati, which he visited on his way to Missouri in 1831 and which had about twenty-nine thousand inhabitants. Moreover, the city of Zion resembled Philadelphia in format more than a New England village. Philadelphia, like the city of Zion, had straight streets, square blocks, and a square placed precisely in the center of the grid where the public buildings were to stand. In the 1820s and 1830s, New England towns were just beginning to develop small village greens, and they usually knew little of straight streets. Much more in the city mode, Zion even had similarities to Washington, D.C.: Jefferson thought the federal capital would fit into 1,500 acres, about the same size as Zion, and had asked for 100-foot-wide streets, grand boulevards by the standards of the time, comparable to Joseph's 132-foot-wide streets. (In the revised plat, Joseph narrowed most streets to 82.5 feet, but so did L'Enfant, reducing Washington's to 80-foot widths.)⁶ We have no idea of the origins of Joseph's spacious conceptions, but they certainly do not conform to the New England town model.⁷

The city of Zion, moreover, was situated differently in its worldwide geography. New England towns existed more or less on a level plane, with Boston and a few other commercial centers elevated above the rest. The city of Zion stood at the center of a global vortex; all converts were to turn their faces to Zion. It was a place of refuge in the apocalyptic destructions that were to precede the coming of Christ. The revelations called Zion the "center place," the point where all the saints were to gather.⁸ New England towns were dotted more or less evenly across the landscape; Zion was the point toward which all the gathering routes converged.

In another departure from New England conventions, Joseph added a third dimension to the two-part Mormon geography of gathering and city: an architectural space. At the center of the city, on two ten-acre squares, would rise twenty-four temples, quite unlike anything in New England towns, even if we take into account the village greens with their churches, banks, and schools. A few lines on the plat descriptions do make the temples sound like the civic structures planned for Philadelphia's public square. The lines read: "The painted squares in the middle are for public buildings," and go on to explain, "It will require twenty-four buildings to supply them with houses of worship, schools, etc." Those are the words of conventional town planning, but in the next paragraph, the titles for the temples shoot off into the heavens. Each temple is numbered on the plat and a title assigned to each group of three: "Numbers 10, 11, 12, are to be called House of the Lord, for the Presidency of the High and Most Holy Priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of the Son of God, upon Mount Zion, City of the New Jerusalem." Each trio had similarly elaborate names: "Numbers 19, 20, 21, House of the Lord, the Law of the Kingdom of Heaven, and Messenger to the People; for the Highest Priesthood after the Order of Aaron." All eight titles are like that, couched in an extravagant language that suggests exotic functions not to be imagined in New

England or Philadelphia public buildings.⁹

This third spatial dimension, temples, appeared on Mormon maps from the beginning, even when the uses of the temples were only hinted at. The only known purpose for the temple in Independence, when it was designated in an 1831 revelation, was to be a place for the return of Jesus. The lack of known functions for the temples implies that the space was to be created first and its uses filled in afterwards. The purposes of the twenty-four temples on the Jackson County plat never got beyond the vague hints in the descriptions before the Mormons left. In Kirtland, the revelations called for two buildings: one a temple for the “work of the presidency,” and the other a twin of the first on an adjoining lot for printing and translating—a structure that was never built.¹⁰ As it worked out in the cities Joseph did build, the functions of the twenty-four temples were boiled down to fit into one building that served a variety of purposes.

Little by little this single temple’s place in Mormon space was clarified. In a revelation in Jackson County in 1831, the site of the temple in Independence was called the “center place,” and a year later another revelation said, “The city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints, beginning at this place, even the place of the temple.”¹¹ The city was the center of gathering, and the temple was the beginning of the city—the center of the center—thus connecting the temple to the whole world.¹² Gradually between 1831 and 1835, the dynamic of this spatial formation took shape. Converts from all over the earth were to collect in the central city to receive what the revelations called an “endowment of power” and then to go back into the wide world to teach the gospel.¹³ The temple, the city, and the gathering formed a pattern of movement and preparation in a distinctive Mormon geography.¹⁴

It is difficult to grasp exactly what the “endowment of power” in the temple entailed. Partly it was a pentecostal experience of spiritual illumination, visions, and even a view of God’s face. “Let thy house be filled, as with a rushing mighty wind, with thy glory,” Joseph prayed at Kirtland. Partly the endowment involved learning through rituals and ordinances, like the washing of feet, and study of the “best books.” Partly it was purification to rid the people of every sin. “Sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him.”¹⁵ The combination of holy experience, knowledge, and righteousness was to empower the recipients spiritually, enabling them to preach more convincingly. Having been strengthened and instructed, they were to go out into the world and harvest more souls.¹⁶ In the dedicatory prayer in the Kirtland temple, Joseph asked that “thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power,” and “from this place . . . bear exceedingly great and glorious tidings, in truth, unto the ends of the earth.”¹⁷ The whole scheme divided space in two, with Zion and the temple at the center emanating spiritual power, and a Babylon-like world outside, where people were to be converted and brought to Zion, the missionaries going out and the converts coming in.¹⁸

Joseph spoke of this combination of tasks, spaces, and movements as “the work.”¹⁹ As he realized almost immediately after the Church’s organization, the work required the three-part combination of temple, city, and gathering; and wherever circumstances led him, he strove with all his might to bring those spaces into existence. However impoverished and despairing the Saints were after moving to a new place, he began at once to reignite the work and construct these spaces. A simple temple was planned for Jackson County before the saints were expelled in 1833. Though only a shed-

like structure with a plain facade, the Independence temple had two assembly rooms and double altars like the later Kirtland temple. Then while the Jackson County saints were still putting down their roots, he made plans for Kirtland. Though the Mormons owned very little land and were relative newcomers, Joseph mapped a plat for Kirtland on the model of the city of Zion. A revelation in May 1833 referred to Kirtland as a city of a stake of Zion, and at the center was to be a house of the Lord just as in Independence.²⁰ After being driven out of Kirtland, he repeated this process at Far West, again planning for a temple and mapping a city plat, this time with one center square, but with the same 132-foot-wide main streets, and 82.5-foot-wide side streets.²¹ At Nauvoo, the temple was again the leading feature on the plat of the city prepared by Gustavus Hill. After Joseph's death, Brigham Young replicated the pattern in Utah.

By this time the basic model was carved in stone. In five locations from Jackson County to Salt Lake City, the saints reconstructed the gathering-city-temple model of space that was mapped within a year after the organization of the church.²²

Joseph built temples to the neglect of far more sensible chapels and meetinghouses. As the church grew in Kirtland, the brethren suggested that they enlarge their meetinghouse like the other denominations in town had done. Joseph would have none of it, even with converts arriving by the hundreds. He proposed a building that would be huge for the time: 65 by 55 feet wide and two stories high, with a 120-foot bell tower—entirely out of scale for the little village even now. Later in Nauvoo the same vision possessed him. He could not even be bothered to find suitable places for the saints to meet on Sundays. They collected in houses, back rooms of stores and printing offices, and, in good weather, out of doors; they never did build a proper chapel, even when the Mormon population surged to over ten thousand. The building effort all went into a temple that stretched their resources to the limits, as if the temple was a vital part of the work and chapels and Sunday meetings were incidental.²³

The temple was early Mormonism's primal architectural space, as the city was its living space, and the gathering routes from the mission fields were its world geography. Joseph's temples, like temples throughout history, focused sacred power at a single spot. Temples are traditionally the places where heaven touches the earth; in them the true format of the cosmos and the individual person is laid down in ritual and architecture. "The temple is the reduced plan of the cosmos," the temple scholar John Lundquist has written, "and as such must be an accurate representation of the heavenly prototype."²⁴ Temples are similarly models for the body which is sometimes called a temple.²⁵ People enter temples to divine the meaning of existence and to put themselves in touch with the holy.²⁶ Joseph Smith's temples, located in the center (or in the case of Nauvoo, at the high point) of a central city sacralized the landscape. At Kirtland, he prayed that God's "holy presence may be continually in this house."²⁷ Instead of all spaces having an equal amount of divine presence, in this one space, God was present in greater intensity, sharply focusing Mormon religious space.

The Mormons' sacred geography had no equivalent elsewhere in the United States.²⁸ Americans scattered their church buildings, putting up two or three in a single little town. Evangelical Christians would say God was diffused even more widely, into the hearts of all believers. No one place or building could lay special claim to God's presence. The American religious landscape was flat, with no foci, no peaks, no vortexes; divinity was spread democratically through religious space just as political rights were

distributed through civic space.

The closest most Americans came to focused holiness was in the presence of sublime nature. Many visitors felt exalted as they stood before Niagara Falls or looked from a high promontory at the great bend in Connecticut River. “If, in th’ immensity of space,” an observer at Niagara wrote, “God makes one spot his special dwelling-place, That spot is this.”²⁹ But sublime nature was not like Mormon space either, for the most inspiring scenes lay outside of settled society, beyond the margins of everyday life, while the Mormon temple stood at the center of the city, where daily life circulated around it.

Was there anything like the temple and the city of Zion in the contemporary United States? More like Mormon geography than any other religious configuration was the space that formed around Nauvoo’s neighbor 200 miles to the east, Chicago. Chicago came into its own within a few years of Nauvoo’s founding and, though raised on entirely different principles, had a parallel spatial structure based on the powerful attraction of its markets. The signs of its future greatness were recognized soon after the United States received title to Chicago from the Indians in 1833. The continental divide, between Lake Michigan and the Atlantic Ocean on one side and the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico on the other, lay just a few miles southwest of Chicago and only about fifteen feet above the level of the lake. A swampy patch of ground covered the divide, and in high water season, a canoe could traverse it without portaging, making it possible theoretically to canoe from the Gulf of St. Lawrence through the lakes, up the Chicago River and across the portage to the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers and finally to New Orleans, all without leaving the water. Developers immediately saw that a relatively short canal could connect Chicago on Lake Michigan to the tributaries of the Mississippi, putting the Great Lakes in touch with the Gulf of Mexico.

For four years after the Indian treaty in 1833, the city boomed. Population leaped from four hundred to four thousand, and land prices rose proportionately. Plans were laid out for a canal and a railroad, and the city was on its way. Then the Panic of 1837 stopped development in its tracks, and for the next seven years while Nauvoo was growing, Chicago stood still. Only when the saints were about to leave Illinois for the West did confidence return to Chicago. In 1848 the canal and the first stretch of railroad were completed, and the city began the sustained growth that made it the second largest in the nation by the end of the century. Nauvoo at its peak population in 1846 may have been about as large as Chicago, but would soon have been eclipsed.

Chicago resembled Nauvoo in standing at the center of a vortex of converging forces. But in Chicago the market drew people rather than the temple. William Cronon’s magnificent study of the Chicago hinterland, *Nature’s Metropolis*, describes the Chicago market’s organizing influence on forests and prairies hundreds of miles away from the city. “Those who sought to explain its unmatched expansion,” he writes, “often saw it as being compelled by deep forces within nature itself, gathering the resources and energies of the Great West—the region stretching from the Appalachians and the Great Lakes to the Rockies and the Pacific—and concentrating them in a single favored spot at the southwestern corner of Lake Michigan.”³⁰ Lumbermen felled trees in remote forests, herded them downstream to the lake where boards were sawn, and sent the finished products on to the city where they were sold to house builders who furiously constructed dwellings for the mushrooming population. Cattlemen started their drives on distant prairies, headed the animals to the railheads, and put them into cars headed for slaughter

at the Chicago market. Farmers plowed, planted, and harvested their grain, had it graded, and shipped it to Chicago to get the best price. For hundreds of miles in every direction, the Chicago market mobilized the energies, schemes, and hopes of virtually the entire countryside. If the people themselves did not come, the products of their work converged on Chicago, just as Mormon converts gathered to Nauvoo.

The shape of space was the same for the two cities—an expansive funnel collecting for a central city where energy was focused in a single institution. But the underlying principles were entirely different. The magnet for one was the market, for the other, the temple. Chicago's central principle was wealth, Nauvoo's, spiritual empowerment. Chicago's work was to collect products, bring them to market, and exchange them for money to purchase manufactured goods coming from the east by ship and rail.³¹ Nauvoo's work was to collect converts, bring them to Nauvoo for instruction, fill them with divine intelligence, and prepare them for life in the City of Zion.³²

With these two systems standing side by side, the natural question is how did the principles of market and temple affect the two societies?³³ The name Joseph gave to his city, Nauvoo, seems like a start on an answer, especially when we remember that the previous owners called the site Commerce. The earlier name expressed the hope that the flat pushing out into the Mississippi River had commercial possibilities. The rapids just below the city blocked downstream river traffic, making Commerce a natural terminus of shipping from further upstream. As early as 1816 a petition to Congress had requested federal aid to dig a canal to help realize the commercial potential. The drop in the river at Commerce also inspired hope that the Mississippi's vast energy could be harnessed for manufacturing, which, combined with the canal, promised a great future for the site.

Joseph Smith did not squelch these dreams nor attack the mercantile capitalists who conceived them. The plan for Nauvoo showed a canal running across the peninsula down the main street just like the previous owners' plans for the city. John C. Bennett proposed a wing dam in the Mississippi to trap water for industrial use; Joseph did nothing to discourage these plans and even gave them his blessing.³⁴ His letters to Britain, where the Quorum of the Twelve was managing the missionary work, urged them to convert capitalists and send them to Nauvoo to develop manufactures. Joseph rather enthusiastically supported commerce.

And yet, he changed the city's name from Commerce to Nauvoo, the city beautiful, as if he had something else in mind. The change did not exactly signify opposition to commercial capitalism, only a desire to harness it to his own ends. His invitation to capitalists said nothing of profits or great wealth, and in fact he invited them to Nauvoo during a depression, a poor time to begin a new venture. Nauvoo had its great spurt in population in the middle of the slow economic times that put Chicago on hold because people were reluctant to invest. Nauvoo's growth was not dependent on people making a lot of money as Chicago's was; other forces drove Joseph's city. He wanted the capitalists for one reason only—to give work to the poor. In the "Proclamation of the First Presidency of the Church to the Saints Scattered Abroad," he urged all "who have been blessed of heaven with the possession of this world's goods," to "establish and build up manufactures in the city," in order to "strengthen our hands, and assist in promoting the happiness of the Saints."³⁵ Joseph's eyes were on the people moving along the gathering routes, and the thousands already in Nauvoo. They needed jobs, and the capitalists could provide them. Capitalism was welcome in Nauvoo, but on Joseph's

terms—to advance “the work.”

In Chicago, where the great purpose was wealth, the streets had a different look than in Nauvoo. By the late 1840s, Chicago had three hundred dry good shops and groceries, doing a million dollars worth of business a year, not counting hundreds of artisan shops where craftsmen plied their trades. Nauvoo had only a few general stores and a handful of artisan shops.³⁶ Wagonloads of outlying farmers did not converge on Nauvoo, as they did in Chicago, to sell the products of a year’s labor. In Chicago a farmer saw 1,200 wagons full of wheat in one day, there to exchange grain for clothes and tools.³⁷ In Nauvoo, trade was between the city’s own residents and settlers from the immediate vicinity. If Nauvoo’s reach for converts was worldwide, its commercial reach went only a few miles into the countryside.

Less tangible differences than trade figures and the number of shops are more difficult to measure. How did the temple on the highest spot in the city make life different from a place where the central institution was the Board of Trade with its cavernous hall echoing the shouts of the traders? What ideas of manhood and womanhood prevailed when divine intelligence was valued more than wealth? We must assume power went to people of a different sort. For its first mayor, Chicago elected William B. Ogden, born in the same year as Joseph Smith, and the epitome of the best commercial values. He was attracted to Chicago by real estate speculation, made a fortune in land and railroads, and had enough surplus capital to give Cyrus McCormick his start. Ogden exemplified the successful man of business and civic leadership, being the first president of the Union Pacific Railroad, president of Rush Medical College, and president of the University of Chicago Board of Trustees. Ogden was Chicago’s leading citizen, and the embodiment of a business society’s finest qualities.

The mayor of Nauvoo in 1844 tried to sell real estate in his city but kept fumbling and making mistakes; he declared bankruptcy at one point and died with little property.³⁸ Without wealth or business success to his credit, Joseph Smith was given all the highest posts in the city and received its nomination for president—and why? Because in the minds of the converts, he opened a conduit to heaven. He promised glories in the hereafter and divine authority to seal marriages and baptize for the dead. He spoke of gods and of ruling other worlds, and his words won the hearts of his people. He could come to power only in a society where divine intelligence and spiritual power outranked wealth and business acumen on the scale of values.

The Marxists tell us that in a market society people turn themselves into commodities. We package ourselves, sell ourselves, and value people for their worth in the market of social exchange—that is, by status or position. We become in our essence what we are in our work—a professor, a stockbroker, a secretary, a car mechanic. The market invades our imaginations and takes over our ways of thinking about all of life. How would people in a temple society conceive themselves and other people? What would be the metaphors to govern self-understanding in Zion? These are the questions that must be asked of Mormon space in the nineteenth century, even if the answers are not entirely clear.³⁹

With this question in mind, I came across a passage in *The Republic*, where Socrates and Glaucon describe an ideal man of understanding who refuses to pursue power or wealth like most men of his time. The questioner asks how the man can go on living in the city when he goes against common sense. The answer is that he does not live

in an earthly city, but in an ideal city, for only there can he be his best person. “In heaven,” Socrates says, “there is laid up a pattern of it, methinks, which he who desires may behold, and beholding, may set his own house in order. But whether such an one exists, or ever will exist in fact, is no matter; for he will live after the manner of that city, having nothing to do with any other.”⁴⁰ Elsewhere, in his *Laws*, Plato argues that priorities must be changed for human life to flourish. “There are in all three things about which every man has an interest; and the interest about money, when rightly regarded, is the third and lowest of them: midway comes the interest of the body; and, first of all, that of the soul; and the state which we are describing will have been rightly constituted if it ordains honours according to this scale.”⁴¹ Joseph Smith, knowing nothing of this philosophical tradition, tried to build the heavenly city on earth and to put the cause of the soul first.

Nauvoo did not long survive Joseph Smith. Just as Chicago was taking off, Nauvoo was obliterated. Within two years after Joseph’s death, nearly all the Mormon residents were straggling westward across the Iowa prairie, and the city was left empty. In another two years, an arsonist had burned the temple. Thereafter, Nauvoo fell into a deep sleep from which it awakened in the twentieth century as a historical shrine.

But the destruction of the physical city did not erase Joseph Smith’s map from Mormon minds. “The work” began again the moment the saints reached the Salt Lake Valley. The city of Zion rose at the foot of the Wasatch mountains, and Brigham Young filled up the world with smaller satellite cities. Until the end of the century, the Mormon vortex gathered people with ever-increasing force. And at the center of Salt Lake, the temple anchored the whole system, as it had done in previous Zions.

While the work went on as before, Mormon space also evolved during its Utah years. Long before the Salt Lake temple’s completion, it had numerous competitors in the realm of sacred space. In Utah, Mormons for the first time constructed chapels for worship and activity, creating hundreds of little epicenters of religious life. The diffusion of church buildings necessarily flattened the religious landscape, making Mormon space more like Protestant space outside of Utah. In the twentieth century, chapel and temple building has accelerated all around the globe wherever the saints reside, while the voice and face of the church president, relayed via satellite, is heard and seen on every continent. In modern Mormon space, one temple and one city do not focus a global geography as they once did; Salt Lake City is headquarters rather than the central place. The reversal of the gathering doctrine, coupled with this multiplication of temples and chapels, means that Mormon space is no longer a funnel with light from the center shining into the dark world and emissaries going forth to gather in converts. Zion is almost everywhere.⁴²

These changes may appear to support the common reading of Mormon history as a twentieth-century apostasy from a nineteenth-century visionary culture, a decline like the better known decline of Puritanism in colonial America. I am not persuaded by that understanding of Mormon history, nor do I believe that Joseph Smith would have regretted the spread of temples and chapels around the globe. He himself hinted that there would be temples in other places. He did not think of the temple, as the ancient Jews did, as a singular location where God touched the earth. If Joseph Smith was nothing else, he was expansive, and saw virtually unlimited possibilities for the work he began. The global ambitions of Mormonism today would only have pleased him.

But if apostasy is not the right word, change certainly is. For Mormonism's spatial configuration has evolved over a century and a half. In the early church, Joseph believed that the work required converts to gather, and so he pulled them out of the world into a city where divine intelligence would illuminate their lives and make them into saints. He built his cities more or less without heed of the commercial and political forces that organized national space in nineteenth-century America. He gathered people with promises of a spiritual endowment, not wealth. The converts who came to Nauvoo from many backgrounds, Joseph said, all "feel an attachment to the cause of truth." If they would hold on and live right, he predicted, "the intelligence of heaven will be communicated to them, and they will, eventually see eye to eye, and rejoice in the full fruition of that glory which is reserved for the righteous."⁴³ That he attracted so many to his peculiar religious enterprise in a period when the market was taking over the nation is a tribute to his powerful vision and remarkable originality.

1. J. B. Harley, "Maps, Knowledge, and Power," in Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 281–82, 302.

2. C. Mark Hamilton, *Nineteenth-Century Mormon Architecture and City Planning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 15–18, 34.

3. The historian of American town planning is John W. Reps, and his priceless introduction to the subject is *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965).

4. Revelation 3:10–21.

5. Warren S. Thompson and P. K. Whelpton, *Population Trends in the United States* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933), 26. There were fifty-eight towns with populations between 2,500 and 10,000, and sixteen with populations between 10,000 and 25,000. The population projection for the city of Zion put it in the top quarter of all American cities in 1830. Only one city, New York, had over 100,000 people at that time.

6. Reps, *The Making of Urban America*, 243, 245, 250. Joseph's four main boulevards remained a generous 132 feet wide.

7. Thomas Graves, the surveyor and engineer for the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1629, favored square towns with a meetinghouse at the center, but with farmers on forty-acre farm lots and less than 150 families per town, compared to the city of Zion's 2,600 houselots. Sylvia Fries, *The Urban Idea in Colonial America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977), 48–49. Fries argues that Puritans were wary of urban concentrations and wanted to plant small country towns. James L. Machor resists Fries's anti-urban emphasis and sees the Puritans configuring an urban-pastoral landscape where town and country blend and people enjoy the virtues of both. *Pastoral Cities: Urban Ideals and the Symbolic Landscape of America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 47–70.

John Reps, the leading student of town planning in the United States, links Joseph's ideas to the biblical cities described in Numbers 35:1–5 and Ezekiel 42, 45, and 48: square cities with farms outside the city boundaries. Reps, *Making of Urban America*, 472. For analysis of Puritan adaptations of the bible cities, see Fries, *The Urban Idea in America*, 64–66.

8. Doctrine and Covenants 45:66; 57:1–3.

9. I read into these incongruent descriptions the divergent minds of Joseph Smith and Frederick Williams. Joseph calls for twenty-four temples and Frederick asks, “What for?” They are public buildings, Williams concludes, and Joseph lets it pass, for they were that, though their potential uses were far more elegant than Joseph could then explain or perhaps even understood himself

10. Doctrine and Covenants 94.

11. Doctrine and Covenants 57:3; 84:4.

12. A Nauvoo convert understood that the saints gathered for safety’s sake in the first place, and then “that they may build a sanctuary to the name of the Most High . . . and attend to such ordinances and receive such blessings as they could not while scattered upon the face of the whole earth.” Elder Francis Moon, quoted in Robert Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 69.

13. Doctrine and Covenants 38:32–33, 38; 39:15; 43:16; 95:8.

14. The reason for gathering was partly to build the city and the temple. “He that believeth shall not make haste, but let all the Saints who desire to keep the commandments of heaven and work righteousness, come to the place of gathering as soon as circumstances will permit. [I]t is by united efforts that great things are accomplished, and while the Saints are scattered to the four winds, they cannot be united in action, if they are in spirit; they cannot all build at one city, or lift at one stone of the great Temple, though their hearts may all desire the same thing.” Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1949), 4:449.

15. Doctrine and Covenants 88:68.

16. The meaning of the endowment of power seems especially to be the burden of section 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants, though many passages in the revelations speak to the same end. The dedicatory prayer at the Kirtland temple summed up much of Joseph’s vision of a Zion people.

17. Doctrine and Covenants 110:22–23.

18. “The first great object before us, and the Saints generally, is to help forward the completion of the Temple and the Nauvoo House—buildings which are now in progress according to the revelations, which must be completed to secure the salvation of the Church in the last days; for God requires of His Saints to build Him a house where His servants may be instructed, and endowed with power from on high, to prepare them to go forth among the nations, and proclaim the fullness of the gospel for the last time, and bind up the law, and seal up the testimony, leaving this generation without excuse, and the earth prepared for the judgments which will follow. In this house all the ordinances will be made manifest, and many things will be shown forth, which have been hid from generation to generation.” “Epistle of the Twelve to Britain,” Nov. 15, 1841. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:449.

The center-periphery division shows up in writings to “the Saints scattered abroad,” and in the verb “go forth,” commonly used for missionaries sent from Zion into the world. Zion was home, peace, and truth; the world was darkness, struggle, and danger.

19. The January 1841 “Proclamation of the First Presidency to the Saints Scattered Abroad” summed up “the work” in one sentence: “The Temple of the Lord is in process of erection here, where the Saints will come to worship the God of their fathers, according

to the order of His house and the powers of the Holy Priesthood, and will be so constructed as to enable all the functions of the Priesthood to be duly exercised, and where instructions from the Most High will be received, and from this place go forth to distant lands.” Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:269.

20. Doctrine and Covenants 94: 1.

21. Repts, *The Making of Urban America*, 468–69.

22. For temple architecture, see Laurel B. Andrew, *The Early Temples of the Mormons: The Architecture of the Millennial Kingdom in the American West* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978); for the town plats, see Hamilton, *Nineteenth-Century Mormon Architecture*, chap. 2.

23. On the absence of Mormon meetinghouses and the comparison to other denominations, see Milton V. Backman, Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983), 38–39, 275–76; and Andrew, *The Early Temples*, 59.

24. John M. Lundquist, *The Temple: Meeting Place of Heaven and Earth* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 12.

25. On the homologies of temple, home, body, and heart, see Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, trans. J. E. Turner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986 [orig. pub. in German in 1933]), and the discussion in David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, eds., *American Sacred Space* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 7.

26. “In its material production and practical reproduction, sacred space anchors a worldview in the world. As the anthropologist Robert Redfield suggested, a worldview is comprised of at least two dimensions: classification of persons, and orientation in space and time. Sacred space is a means for grounding classifications and orientations in reality, giving particular force to the meaningful focus gained through these aspects of a worldview. Sacred places focus more general orientations in space and time that distinguish center from periphery, inside from outside, up from down, and a recollected past from a meaningful present or an anticipated future.” Chidester and Linenthal, eds., *American Sacred Space*, 12.

Joseph Fielding, an English convert who first saw the site of the Nauvoo temple in 1841, spoke of it as an earthly prototype of heaven: “It would be vain to attempt to describe my feelings on beholding this interesting sight; but if you have the same faith as myself in the great work of God, and consider that the things on earth are patterns of things in heaven, at the same time look back on the form of the temple and font, you may judge of my feelings. Many have been baptized therein for their deceased relatives, and also for the healing of their own afflicted bodies.” Quoted in Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi*, 87–88.

27. Doctrine and Covenants 110:12–13.

28. For a useful overview of the literature and relevant theory on sacred space in the United States, see Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, 1–42.

29. Quoted in Patrick McGreevy, “Niagara as Jerusalem,” *Landscape*, 28 (1985): 29. For the designations of sacred sites in America, see Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), and John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

30. William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991), 9.
31. In Cronon's words: "Although no booster would have put it quite so bluntly, the center of metropolitan empire—and of Turner's frontier—was the marketplace of modern capitalism. When Turner spoke of the frontier as 'the outer edge of the wave,' what he unintentionally described was not some implicitly racist 'meeting point between savagery and civilization' but the ongoing extension of market relations into the ways human beings used the land—and each other—in the Great West." Cronon, *Natures Metropolis*, 52–53.
32. There seems to be general agreement among historians about the religious motivation behind Nauvoo. As Arrington and Bitton put it: "One must remember that in many ways Mormonism was the least attractive of the several available means of emigration to a new country. Demanding of the emigrant strict obedience and continuing economic sacrifice, it offered in return a home in one of the least inviting regions of the hemisphere. Clearly the Mormon religion itself, if not the sole factor behind the emigration, was the key to the process." Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 129. Also, from Laurel Andrew: "Nauvoo, whose sole basis for existence was religious, was an artificial creation with no foundation in commerce or manufacturing; moreover an unusual number of its members could not contribute capital or skills. . . . Its return to somnolence after the Mormon exodus is indicative of the limited possibilities which this location offered." *The Early Temples*, 56–57.
33. The theoretical explanations for Chicago, advanced by nineteenth-century theorists of city growth, emphasized commerce as the governing principle. Cronon, *Natures Metropolis*, 34–43, 53–54.
34. On Nauvoo's commercial possibilities, see Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi*, 40, 43, 150–51, 153.
35. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:268–69.
36. On Nauvoo's "industries," see Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi*, 153.
37. Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 59–60.
38. For the bankruptcy case and the land business in Nauvoo, see Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi*, chap. 5, pp. 168–69.
39. Along with the market, democratic politics is the other source of ruling metaphors in modern American society. In one we buy and sell; in the other we vote as deliberative and equal citizens. In a temple society, people come into God's presence to be spiritually empowered.
40. *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. B. Jowett, 2 vols. (New York: Random House, 1937 [orig. pub. 1892]), 1:851.
41. *The Dialogues of Plato*, 2:509.
42. On the termination of gathering, see Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 140.
43. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:272–73.