

**THE LANDSCAPE OF MODERN MORMONISM:  
UNDERSTANDING THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY  
SAINTS THROUGH ITS TWENTIETH-CENTURY ARCHITECTURE  
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**ABSTRACT**

During the twentieth century, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints altered its policy of gathering converts to “Zion,” a centralized location in the western United States, instead encouraging permanent Mormon settlement throughout the world. In order to achieve a dispersed global membership, the Church constructed regional buildings necessary to facilitate the fundamental socioreligious aspects of the faith. Temples provided exclusive ritual space, helping preserve a distinctive form of worship among diverse religious populations. Meetinghouses furnished community space for weekly spiritual worship, religious instruction, ecclesiastical administration, and social activities, enabling connection among other believers as well as non-Mormon visitors.

Chapter 1 focuses on the central role of temple-building in Mormon Zion-building; without a regional temple, a Mormon landscape was incomplete and therefore perpetually transient. The second and third chapters explore the under-scrutinized role of meetinghouses in Mormon Zion-building. Chapter 2 examines the form and function of meetinghouses, giving attention to stylistic modernization and the evolving multiuse

social hall turned basketball gymnasium. Chapter 3 chronicles the evolution of the Church architecture program, which relied heavily upon standardization and branding during the final half of the twentieth century. Chapter 4 observes the construction of the Mormon cultural landscape in Washington D.C. that helped mend the contentious past between the Church and the federal government. Chapter 5 studies the construction of meetinghouses and a temple in Greater Boston, which afforded access to the intellectual and economic opportunities of the Eastern Establishment. Chapter 6 serves as a concentrated lens into Mormon landscapes of training and education in Provo, Utah.

Together, these six chapters reveal the modern Mormon landscape as one that achieves relative uniformity across a worldwide Church membership and hard-won acceptance within the American religious landscape. The basic programs for modern temples and meetinghouses demonstrate their unique roles in the balancing act of belonging to larger communities as a religious minority while retaining a discernible identity. This dissertation argues that the Church adopted a corporate strategy to efficiently expand into non-Mormon landscapes, maintain control over religious programming, and preserve a resilient yet adaptable socioreligious identity among its membership.