male spirit like unto him to be the Savior" (McConkie, p. 327).

Mary’s willingness to submit to the will of the Father was noted in the biblical account. When Gabriel announced that she would be the mother of the Savior, Mary was perplexed; yet she did not waiver in her humble obedience and faith in God. Her response was unadorned: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38).

Had Judah been a free nation, Mary could have been recognized as a "princess of royal blood through descent from David" (JC, p. 90). Being of that earthly lineage, Jesus was correctly called a descendant of David (see Jesus Christ in the Scriptures: The Bible).

As a faithful Jewish woman, she followed the customs of her day. At least forty-one days after giving birth to her first son, Mary went to the Court of the Women, where she became ceremonially clean in the purification rite, offering two turtle doves or two pigeons at the temple as a sacrifice (Luke 2:22–24). In the years that followed, Mary bore additional children by her earthly husband Joseph (Matt. 1:25; 13:55–56; Mark 6:3). One of them, “James the Lord’s brother” (Gal. 1:19), became a Christian leader in Jerusalem.

In the New Testament, Mary is mentioned in conjunction with the accounts of the youthful Jesus teaching in the temple (Luke 2:41–51), his turning the water to wine at Cana (John 2:2–5), his crucifixion (John 19:25–26), and as mourning with the apostles after Jesus’ ascension (Acts 1:14).

Doctrinally, Latter-day Saints do not view Mary as the intercessor with her son in behalf of those who pray and they do not pray to her. They affirm the virgin birth but reject the traditions of the immaculate conception, of Mary’s perpetual virginity, and of her “assumption” (cf. McConkie, p. 327). Mary, like all mortals, returns to the Father only through the atonement of her son Jesus Christ.

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MATERIAL CULTURE

The artifacts of a society are known as its material culture. Latter-day Saints, like all other cultural groups, have altered their physical surroundings to reflect their own worldview. Every object created or modified by members of a group is part of that group’s material culture. LDS material culture encompasses a particular constellation of objects, only a few of which are unique. But, taken together, they create what can be identified as a Mormon environment.

In parts of the American West settled heavily by Latter-day Saints in the nineteenth century, the landscape reflects their peculiar approach to town building (see community; colonization). One of the top priorities for early settlers was the establishment of extensive irrigation systems that brought mountain water to every farm. Ditches were dug, and dams of a variety of designs were and still are used to divert water onto a plot of land in a rotating calendar of “water turns.” The influence of irrigation can be seen to this day in Mormon-settled areas where green fields, shady, flower-filled yards, and rows of Lombardy poplars mark the landscape, even in the driest desert areas (see agriculture).

A settlement pattern used frequently by Mormon pioneers has become known as the Mormon village (see city planning; ward), with homes and businesses situated closely around the central square, streets oriented toward the cardinal directions, and farm lands extending out around this settlement. Farmers left the village to work fields allotted to them by their ecclesiastical leaders. Designs of outbuildings and houses were based on settlers’ previous experience or on knowledge gained from neighbors through a process of oral tradition and example (see folklore). Hay was stacked with a “Mormon derrick,” a device that can still be seen in several variations although no longer used, in the Mormon-settled West.

The most distinctive Mormon architecture has been in religious buildings: temples, tithing houses, and meetinghouses, for instance. Important LDS symbols, such as the beehive; the sun, moon, and stars; and the all-seeing eye, appear on many of these structures.

Most material objects found in early LDS homes were similar to those found in other American homes. Ethnic origins of the makers often influenced furniture design. Some furniture built by Mormon craftspeople bore cultural symbols similar to those found on buildings. Prior to the coming of the railroad, locally made furniture was distinctive, mostly because it had to be built out of local softwoods rather than eastern hardwoods. Thus, spin-
dles, legs, and other parts had to be thicker than normal to support the same weight. One item of furniture, a lounge with a section that pulled out to accommodate two sleepers, became known as the "Mormon couch" because of its popularity in Utah.

Today, Latter-day Saints continue to surround themselves with objects typical of their home countries. In addition, an LDS home may contain elements that identify its occupants as practicing Saints. Often, there is a picture of a temple—usually the one where the residents received their endowments or were married. The temple motif may be carried out in other objects, such as quilts and embroidery (see FOLK ART). Photos of family members are often found in profusion, reflecting the cultural and personal emphasis on family.

The Church’s emphasis on emergency preparedness, especially home food storage, has caused members to devise methods for creating storage space in homes of limited size. What appears to be a round table covered by a long tablecloth may actually be a large cylindrical container of wheat, beans, or rice. Food practices of the Latter-day Saints, also a part of material culture, often focus on the rotating use of storage foods.

LDS women contribute to their material culture through monthly RELIEF SOCIETY homemaking meetings, where they share recipes, craft ideas, and work methods. Particularly popular are inexpensive projects that transform utilitarian objects into decorative ones, such as a small kitchen strainer becoming a Christmas reindeer decoration through the application of colored felt shapes. A craft that becomes popular can sweep through homemaking meetings throughout the Church, and eventually may be seen in a majority of LDS homes for a time.

Even after death, material reminders of Latter-day Saints’ religious values can be found in their gravestones. Symbols such as clasped hands and doves, while not unique to Mormon culture, evoke images of eternity for Latter-day Saints that are reflective of their beliefs. Modern gravestones often have an image of a temple on one side, with a list of the couple’s children on the other, emphasizing again the idea that a good marriage and family are the best measures of a life well lived.

The Church itself contributes to the material culture of its members. It produces or has produced books of scripture, pictures, journals, lesson manuals, videotapes, sacrament trays, Primary bandalos, commemorative jewelry, and other items used by members in practicing their religion. Some, such as printed programs for ward SACRAMENT MEETINGS, are ephemeral, but they are no less part of the material culture.

Today, as the Church spreads throughout the world, it is more difficult to identify specifically LDS objects. The Salt Lake Temple is one symbol that is frequently represented in crafts from many
Navajo pot by Lucy Leupp MeKelvey (1989), fired ceramic. Motifs on this pot include four Book of Mormon brothers (Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi), gold plates, and serpent designs reminiscent of those associated with the white Aztec god Quetzalcoatl. Some Latter-day Saints believe that Quetzalcoatl mythology derived in part from the resurrected Jesus Christ's visit to the American continent, an event recorded in the Book of Mormon. Church Museum of History and Art.

cultures, including Tongan tapa cloth and Native American beadwork. Some symbols and objects may be universal to all Church members, while others will be localized. A bottle of home-preserved peaches is not unique in itself, but the sense of religious obligation to “put up fruit” and the implications of righteousness attached to the preserver are unique to this culture. All objects identifiable as “Mormon” are expressive of the values of their makers. Latter-day Saints will continue to manipulate their physical environment, mixing their religious values with influences from their ethnic or national cultures to create a landscape that is uniquely their own.

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MATERNITY AND CHILD HEALTH CARE

Before professional doctors and nurses assumed primary responsibility for delivering health care, LDS women played a major role in providing maternity and child health care in their communities. Their efforts continued into the twentieth century with the establishment of maternity and children’s hospitals and clinics under the sponsorship of the RELIEF SOCIETY and PRIMARY and with some women still serving as midwives in rural areas. The Relief Society also sponsored educational programs to prepare mothers for the delivery and care of infants and children. Concern for the health of mothers and children continues in Relief Society lessons today, and members are advised to seek the best medical care available. Specially trained Church missionaries also assist in programs to improve health care in developing countries.

At the time the Church was established (1830), the methods of many doctors were experimental and often harsh, and women usually did not call upon men for maternity care because it was thought unseemly. When available, midwives often assisted during childbirth. As the Church grew, leaders called and set apart women to serve as midwives. In Nauvoo in the 1840s, the Prophet Joseph SMITH set apart three midwives. After the main body of the Church moved to the Salt Lake Valley, other women were called to serve as midwives both in Salt Lake City and in the outlying settlements. Because midwives were called by priesthood authority, they were accorded trust and respect similar to that given ecclesiastical leaders. They often dispensed herb treatments, passed on by experimentation and word of mouth, and sometimes administered health blessings.