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Signifying Sainthood, 1830-2001

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LEONARD J. ARRINGTON
MORMON HISTORY LECTURE SERIES
No. 7

SIGNIFYING SAINTHOOD, 1830-2001

by

Jan Shipps

October 11, 2001

Sponsored by

Special Collections & Archives
Merrill Library
Utah State University
Logan, Utah

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Introduction

F. Ross Peterson

The establishment of a lecture series honoring a library's special collection and a donor to that collection is unique. Utah State University's Merrill Library houses the personal and historical collection of Leonard J. Arrington, a renowned scholar of the American West. As part of Arrington's gift to the university, he requested that the university's historical collection become the focus for an annual lecture on an aspect of Mormon history. Utah State agreed to the request and in 1995 inaugurated the annual Leonard J. Arrington Mormon History Lecture Series.

Utah State's Special Collections and Archives is ideally suited as the host for the lecture series. The state's land grant institution began collecting agricultural and economic records very early, but in the 1960s became a major depository for Mormonabilia. Utah is unique in that one religion dominated the historical evolution of the state. Leonard Arrington, accompanied by his wife Grace Fort, joined the USU faculty in 1946 and, along with S. George Ellsworth, Joel Ricks, and Milton C. Abrams, focused on gathering original Mormon diaries, journals, and letters for the library. Professional archivists were hired and the concept of "special collections" blossomed at Utah State University.

In many ways, Leonard Arrington profited from this vision. Trained as an economist at the University of North Carolina, Arrington became an economic historian of international repute. Each month, Arrington and Ellsworth met with Eugene Campbell and Wendell Rich and presented their ideas on specific historical topics. Arrington, a native of Twin Falls, Idaho, published *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints* in 1958. Utilizing the available collections and always seeking additional material, Arrington and his associates made Utah State University their base as they embarked on numerous publishing and editorial ventures.

They helped organize both the Western History Association and the Mormon History Association. They followed the professional organizations

with the creation of journals such as the *Journal of Mormon History*, *Dialogue*, and the *Western Historical Quarterly*. The *Quarterly* has been edited at Utah State University since its inception twenty-five years ago. In fact, Arrington and Ellsworth were the first editors. Their idea was to provide new alternatives and opportunities for young scholars of the West in general and the Mormon West in particular.

Arrington began writing biographies and institutional histories during the 1960s. He fostered careers, encouraged students, and employed many as researchers. His studies of Charles C. Rich, William Spry, and David Eccles illustrate this phase of his endeavors. At the same time, he also finished histories of the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company and of Kennecott Copper. Arrington's role as researcher, writer, founder, editor, nourisher, and friend continued to blossom.

His reward was an appointment as LDS church historian in 1973, a position he held for ten years. Simultaneously, Arrington assumed the newly created Lemuel Redd Chair of Western History at Brigham Young University. Arrington's focus became exclusively Mormon history and he attempted to create an atmosphere of open professional research. The church allowed him to hire a number of historians to work on special projects and assignments. Mormon history flourished during his tenure as historian and his own career was enhanced by the publication of *The Mormon Experience*, co-authored with Davis Bitton, and *American Moses: A Biography of Brigham Young*.

In 1981, Arrington and his staff moved to BYU full-time and established the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of History. He continued to publish and mentor other prospective historians. After his retirement, he published the monumental two-volume *History of Idaho* as well as numerous biographies of such western figures as Harold Silver and Charlie Redd. Widowed, he married Harriet Horne during this period, and she became his travel companion as well as an active partner in his research and writings. On February 11, 1999, Leonard passed away peacefully at the couple's Salt Lake City home. Leonard and Harriet chose to deposit their vast collection of primary material as well as their library at Utah State University. In October 2001, Utah State University officially established the Leonard J. Arrington Historical Archives in the Special Collections and Archives Department of University Libraries.

A Note on the Author

Stan L. Albrecht

*I*t is my great pleasure to introduce our special guest for this evening's Seventh Annual Leonard J. Arrington Mormon History Lecture.

I think it is particularly fitting that Dr. Jan Shipps was selected to give the annual lecture on the day of the formal opening of the Arrington collection at the Utah State University Merrill Library. The two names, Arrington and Shipps, are almost synonymous with the historical study of the new religious tradition that constitutes Mormonism. One looked at that topic of study from within, the other as a thoughtful and sensitive outsider. Both contributed greatly to our understanding of the forces that shaped what other social scientists have labeled "a new world religion."

Jan Shipps is professor emeritus of history and religious studies in the School of Liberal Arts at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis. She is also senior research associate in the Polis Research Center at IUPUI and a regular columnist for beliefnet.com. Among so many other things, she was a founding co-editor of *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* and for ten years served as director of the IUPUI Center for American Studies.

Although not a Mormon, Jan Shipps is a recognized authority on the Latter-day Saints (the Mormons). In this capacity she is often interviewed by representatives of print and electronic media outlets when Mormonism is the topic being addressed. In addition to more than fifty articles and reviews for both popular and scholarly periodicals, she is the author of *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (1985), a work that has often been reprinted and is regularly adopted for use as a text in college and university courses on American religion. Her *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years Among the Mormons* is a work that combines intellectual autobiography with a variety of mostly previously unpublished essays that she has written across the past quarter century. It was published in early 2001 and was selected for the Mormon History Association's Best Book Award for the year 2000.

Shipps continues to be active in associations of professional historians and scholars of American religion. She was president of the Mormon History Association in 1980, the first non-Mormon and first woman to hold that post. She has twice served as a council member of the American Society of Church History and has served as program chair for an annual meeting of the Western History Association.

Now retired from teaching, Shipps continues to study modern Mormonism and is working on a book that will be called *Being Mormon: The Latter-day Saints Since World War II*. But that is not all. Saying that she decided not to go to her grave known as nothing other than "that Methodist who studied the Mormons," Shipps is currently writing chapters for a book that will be called *See You in Church? Religion and Culture in Urban America*. This work will feature profiles of religion in five American cities. In addition, as part of a project on Religion and Region that is based at the Leonard E. Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion and Public Life at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, she is serving as the editor of a book on religion in the mountain West. It is slated for publication in 2003.

Across a lifetime of teaching and writing, she has received a number of other honors and awards. The one she says she probably treasures most is the Grace Fort Arrington Award for Historical Excellence that was conferred in 1986 shortly after the publication of her first book.

Shipps attended Alabama College in 1946 and again in 1947–1948. She earned a B.S. in history from Utah State University in 1961; an M.A. in History from the University of Colorado in 1962; and a Ph.D. in History from the University of Colorado in 1965.

She is married to Tony Shipps, a distinguished scholar-librarian who once served as assistant director of the library at Utah State University. Since they were wed in a casual civil ceremony in 1949, they decided to celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary with a formal church wedding. Their only son is Stephen Shipps, a musician who would probably be best known to this audience as the violinist who played the solos on the first two Mannheim Steamroller Christmas albums and as the teacher of Marjorie Bagley, first violinist of the Arcata String Quartet and currently in residence at USU. Jan and Tony have two grandchildren.

SIGNIFYING SAINTHOOD, 1830–2001

Arriving in Logan more than four decades ago, I looked around and thought what I was seeing was a typical western town. Let me explain. As everyone who listens for more than a few minutes discovers, I reveal my region of rearing by the way I talk. But an accent only discloses so much. More precisely, I grew up in the small-town South, not an elegant place of moonlight and magnolias, but a little Alabama town. That location limited my vision, especially since my birth coincided with the Great Depression, which made travel a luxury our working class family could not afford. I would learn about cities and the upper Midwest after I married and moved with my husband so that he could go to graduate school “up North.” But when he finished his education and agreed to move to Logan to take up a post in the library at Utah State University (USU), I knew very little about what being “out West” would be like. My entire knowledge of the region came from reading novelists like Edna Ferber and Zane Grey, and, more important, watching what, during my childhood, we all called the “moving pictures.”

As nearly everyone did before television entered our lives, I went to the movies whenever an opportunity to do so presented itself—which was fairly often, especially in the 1940s and 1950s. I watched and enjoyed what I saw. But as I look back, I realize that after I had seen *Gone with the Wind*, *Baby Doll*, and a variety of other southern epics depicting the land where I lived as an area that was quite obviously divorced from the reality of the South I knew, all the films I saw began to take on a patina of unreality.

Because our journey across the country gave me another chance to compare an actuality with its likeness, a place with its fictional representation, I began to think that the visual images presented in films might not always be distorted fabrications. Unlike their unrealistic depictions of the South, I concluded that at least with regard to the western landscape, the film makers got it right. As we drove toward Logan across the

high plains and, especially, as we reached the mountains, over and over again I heard myself exclaiming, “it’s really real; it is really real.”

Consequently, it is not surprising that I would confuse Logan with Hollywood’s portrayal of ordinary small western towns. Except that Logan was much more beautiful. Despite the grandeur of the setting—when we emerged from Logan Canyon into Cache Valley on a crisp late summer morning the view was breathtaking—I anticipated that Logan would also be another case of “it’s really real.”

Of course, I was aware that Logan was a college town and I realized that this variation would set it apart from truly ordinary western towns. But back in Alabama, I had visited the town in which that state’s “ag” school is located. I knew that, aside from the fact that it was home to Alabama’s “cow college,” Auburn was a thoroughly conventional small Southern town. Therefore, I expected that as we settled into our new home in Logan, we would soon find out that we had moved from a large Midwestern city to an archetypal small college town in the heart of the Rocky Mountain West. (Back then, however, I would never have used the word “archetypal” for I would not have known what it meant).

About Logan, I was wrong. Quite wrong. It was not then—and is not now—an everyday, ordinary, more or less generic small Western town that differs from other small towns all across the West only because it is home to a state’s land grant university. Yet discovering just how mistaken was my notion of Logan’s typicality took time.

Actually, I should have known what to expect because I should have read all about Utah before we left Michigan. Smart people who plan journeys to places they have never been nearly always prepare for such trips by reading up on their destinations. Surely this is the recommended course for travelers. But such recommendations often fall by the wayside when the purpose of a forthcoming journey is not a vacation, but the moving of a household. Disengaging from one life and packing up to establish a home elsewhere is often such a busy and stressful time—especially for wives and mothers of small children—that reading about what you will find when you get there is neglected.

We knew something about the town where we would be living because we had read the literature sent to us by Logan’s Chamber of Commerce. But not an awful lot. In 1960, the chamber’s colorful Logan brochure pictured a town nestled against a mountain range. It told us



The Logan Temple. *Special Collections and Archives, Merrill Library, Utah State University.*

about the size of the town's population, its altitude, and the fact that it was home to the largest artificial insemination plant in the world. The text also informed us that the college was a great place to buy cheese. But it did not say much about the ethnicity of the town's inhabitants or its religious makeup.

The view of the Logan Temple that we saw as we entered the valley sent a signal that this was no ordinary small western town. But we did not know how to read that message. Indeed, I remember commenting on the magnificent architecture of this structure and marveling at its placement in the landscape. But I recall as well classifying this extraordinary edifice in my mind with other unusual buildings I had seen since we left the South—the impressive many-sided Bahai temple in Wilmette, Illinois, for instance; Chicago's formidable Museum of Science and Industry; and the graceful Fisher Building in Detroit. As my knowledge of Mormonism was almost nonexistent at the time, the religious significance of the temple did

not strike me as anything exceptional. I probably thought of it as nothing more remarkable than a building that was an astonishingly elegant place of worship for a town of such modest size.

Just how totally devoid of knowledge of Mormonism I was is probably best revealed by my somewhat confused response when, in inviting us to dinner in their home, English Professor Hubert Smith and his wife Anne told us that they were Gentiles. We were pleased to accept their kind invitation, but as we were ushered into their attractive living room I kept wondering why they had been so quick to let us know that they were not Jewish.

Reconstructing a long ago dinner party conversation is impossible, but given my confusion, they must have defined Gentile in Utah terms, for apprehending our own Gentile status is something that was not long delayed. Since Anne Smith was a member of the library staff, the conversation no doubt moved on to a discussion of the university library. It is likely that we also talked about the relative merits of sending our son to public school, as opposed to the Edith Bowen Elementary School that, then as now, functioned as a laboratory for the College of Education at USU. But exactly what else we talked of I cannot remember.

There is, however, one thing about that evening that I recall quite vividly. As one will when visiting in the home of someone theretofore unknown, I examined the books in a living room bookcase. When conversation flagged, I asked about one of the books on the shelf. I wondered about it since its title, *A Little Lower than the Nagels*, seemed somewhat odd. Our hostess removed the volume from the shelf and, opening the cover, revealed that it was a presentation copy signed by the author, Virginia Sorenson. The work, Anne said, was Sorenson's fictionalized account of the life of Joseph Smith.¹

Rarely, if ever, having seen a presentation copy before, I was impressed. But not as much as I might have been since I had to say, "Who is Joseph Smith?"

After Anne explained, I asked, "And what exactly is a 'nagel'?"

Because I am not a journal keeper, recovering her exact answer after all these years is out of the question. But my memory is acute enough for me to provide an approximate account of Anne's response. She said that an unfortunate accident had damaged the volume so that they had to have it rebound. She added that the work's title is actually *A Little Lower*

than the Angels, but that, in stamping the title in gold, the book-binder reversed the first two letters of the final word making the title read *A Little Lower than the Nagels*.

The title notwithstanding, I asked to borrow the book. I took it home and read it, virtually in a single sitting. Such was my introduction to Mormonism and its founder. Considering my subsequent sojourn, my forty plus years with the followers of the prophet, make of that what you will.²

In any event, if reading Virginia Sorenson's account was the first step in my orientation to the Mormon story, reading *Great Basin Kingdom* was the second step—and what a giant step that was.³ Someone told me that the author taught at USU, but in these initial stages of getting acquainted with Mormonism, it seemed to me much more critical to get to know the book than the man. (Although I would later have an opportunity to get to know him well, only once during the time we lived in Logan did I meet Leonard Arrington face to face. And that first meeting with this behemoth of Mormon-Utah scholarship, whose work and life is today being celebrated, occurred practically at the very end of our time of residence in Utah.)

As important as those literary preambles were, my true introduction to Mormonism was more experiential than literary. As much as I learned from the Sorenson and Arrington works and from a number of other tomes about the Saints and their past that I managed to read during our months in Cache Valley during the 1960-61 academic year, I learned even more about this religious tradition simply by living in Logan and finishing my baccalaureate at Utah State University.

Let me tell you a little about how this experiential learning came about. As it turned out, I was fortunate enough to take a course from the venerable Joel Ricks during my first quarter as a history major at USU.⁴ I say fortunate because this was Professor Ricks's last quarter of teaching, which means that had I tarried even for three months before enrolling in history classes, I should have missed hearing about the "olden days" from one who had practically lived through them.

Professor Ricks was powerfully influenced by the work of Frederick Jackson Turner, the famed author of "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," one of the most important essays ever written on the history of the American West.⁵ Ricks had studied about the westward

movement with Turner in graduate school, and for all practical purposes, he had acted as Turner's host when the influential scholar was a visiting professor at Utah State one summer. Thus it is not at all surprising that in teaching western history, Professor Ricks turned the course into a history of the frontier.

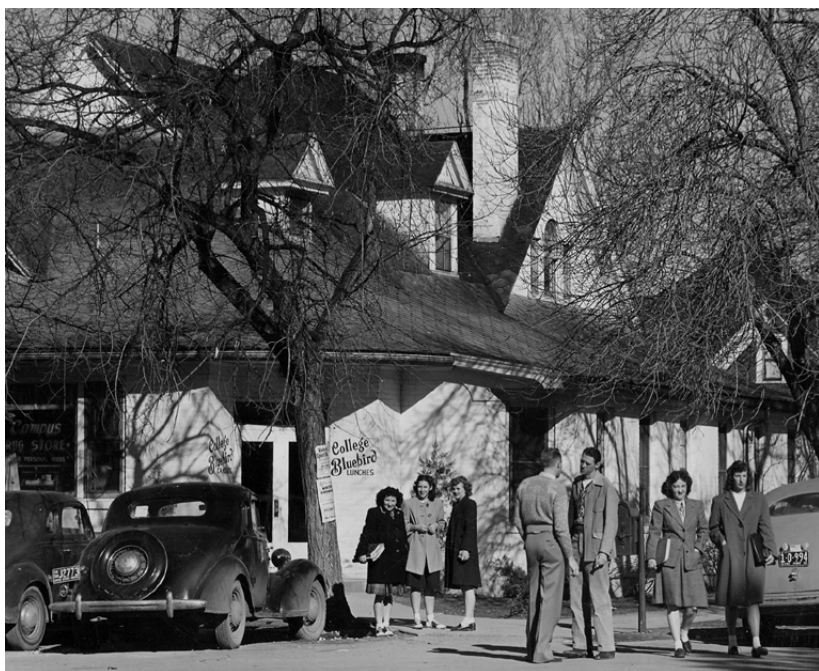
This made for a fascinating term because this elderly scholar seemed to remember the frontier as it actually had been. Professor Turner characterized the process by which the frontier opened as a series of stages. First came the trappers who lived with the Indians, caught and skinned otters and other animals, and sold them. After they had opened paths into what was regarded as wilderness, the trappers and traders were followed by miners. Then came ranchers and, finally, farmers.

Joel Ricks did not teach from a textbook as he described the opening and closing of the frontier. Instead the grizzled instructor gave our class a firsthand account of the frontier process, starting with an explanation that Cache Valley was so called because trappers had used it as a place to store their animal pelts while they waited for a time when they could be traded for money and supplies. He moved on to convince us of the frontier's fascinating import by telling us stories of Western trappers and traders, miners, ranchers, and farmers that he had known personally. What is significant as far as forwarding my knowledge of Mormonism is concerned is that these Ricks stories were stories with a twist. Except for the early trappers and traders, all the Western men he described—women were virtually absent from Joel Ricks's mountain West—were Latter-day Saints (LDS).

I acquired a great deal of information about a host of Mormons in that western history class. But the reality of what being Mormon meant came alive in my consciousness when I invited a fellow student to accompany me to the little College Bluebird, the only restaurant on the edge of the campus in 1960.

When she agreed, and after we found a table (not an easy thing to do back then), I asked her if she would like a cup of coffee. Her response was a disquisition on the Word of Wisdom that helped me understand why I had detected—or so it seemed to me—a look of surprise on the clerk's face at Albertson's when I asked to be directed to the section where coffee was sold.⁶

Coming face to face with what, in 1960, was probably the most serviceable means of signifying Sainthood, it started to dawn on me that



The College Bluebird. *Special Collections and Archives, Merrill Library, Utah State University.*

there might be lots more to being Mormon than simply being a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Some years later, I would be alerted to the exceeding importance of identity markers in religion when—as a part of my preparation for teaching courses in religious studies—I read the work of Peter Berger and other theoretical sociologists and anthropologists of religion.⁷ But I needed no theoretician to explain the markers’ function.

Growing up, as I had, in a monoculturally Protestant universe populated by people who spent their lives struggling to find ways to signal their “saved” status, I decided that Latter-day Saints were fortunate to have a specific means of announcing who they were. In the Mormon world I was confronting, no mysterious hand moved silently to separate the sheep from the goats. The Saints had a set of signifiers that did that sort of separating quite effectively.

Back when smoking was still socially respectable despite the surgeon general's warning that it was hazardous to health, not smoking on principle truly set people apart. It made them peculiar, or so it seemed to me. And not only to me. To the people who made up the larger culture in what could be described as the age of the coffee klatch and the cocktail party, those who did not smoke, drink alcohol, or even coffee were, at the very least, regarded as atypical if not abnormal. That is, everywhere except in the Mormon culture region. There, as I—then a smoker, a coffee addict, and a sometime consumer of alcohol—would soon see, the situation was reversed. Those who failed to keep the Word of Wisdom were the people who were weird.

Knowing about the Word of Wisdom did little to help clarify issues of doctrinal belief. Most certainly it did not equip me with the sort of information that would allow me to figure out what was orthodox and what was heretical. Yet this overt means of signifying Sainthood furnished me, a newcomer with no knowledge of Mormonism, with a means of beginning an extended process of reading the culture.

But if keeping the Word of Wisdom was a boundary marker providing a road map to Mormonism and Mormon culture, things were by no means as uncomplicated as my erstwhile classmate made it sound. Before we had been in Logan very long, we had attended several dinner parties whose guest lists were mostly composed of people who said they were Mormons, but where the ingredients of the drinks served before dinner included alcohol and where the dessert was always accompanied by after-dinner coffee. This made me wonder if degrees of being Mormon existed. If so, what sort of standing did drinking coffee but not alcohol signify in the world the Saints inhabited? And what about smoking? Was that worse than consuming beverages that were off-limits in the Mormon community?

Over the years, any number of signals about the Word of Wisdom came my way. The one I remember best, I think, was the one sent by Robert Flanders, the author of *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi*.⁸ At a meeting of the Mormon History Association in 1972, Bob, who was a member of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS), invited me to sit at a lunch table with a group of RLDS historians. When he ordered a cup of coffee, I was so obviously astonished that he reassured me it was okay. "You'll notice," he said, "that I'll let it get cold before I drink it."

Having read the text of Doctrine and Covenants (D&C) 89 (Section 86 in the RLDS Book of Doctrine and Covenants) by that time, I knew that the original prohibition was against the consumption of “hot drinks.” Consequently, I realized that this was not simply an instance of following the first Mormon prophet’s advice quite literally. Not only was the Word of Wisdom a means by which Saints identified themselves to outsiders; it was also a very effective means of communicating where one stood inside the Mormon community. How closely its members complied with the dietary requirements set forth in the Doctrine and Covenants was an important means of establishing one’s position within that community.

But as everyone who has been a part of the Mormon world well knows, the Word of Wisdom is only one of a multitude of tangible signals Latter-day Saints (and Latter Day Saints) used (and use) to locate themselves vis-à-vis the rest of the community. Just how intricate and complicated this set of interior messages was (and is) was not experientially impressed on my consciousness until I learned a couple of lessons about how dress likewise signifies standing within the Saintry circle.

During the academic year that I spent in Logan, I heard about the special underclothing called garments that Latter-day Saints wear. But in 1960–1961, long before enterprising T-shirt makers came up with the one designed for sale in Salt Lake City that reads “Utah—the land of the funny underwear,” this aspect of Mormon practice was not visible to the uninitiated. Certainly it was not visible to me. If garments were mentioned in what I read about the Saints, I surely failed to fathom their contemporary significance for a people whose dress and—except for their adherence to the Word of Wisdom—behavior made them appear so thoroughly conventional.

The study of Mormonism I did in order to write a master’s thesis and doctoral dissertation included descriptions of the prophet’s introduction in Nauvoo of seamless one-piece temple garments that covered the Saints from their wrists to their ankles. I had learned as well that Saints were instructed to wear a modified set of garments under their outer apparel after they had been through the Endowment ceremony in the temple. But as my research focus was the Mormons in politics, I read, but did not take note of, a newspaper account of a complaint made by a conservative Saint who was worried that alteration in the garments would undercut

their protective properties. No doubt this was connected to the changes that were made in the style of the garments in 1923.⁹

Perhaps it was because these changes made the undergarments less bulky and easier to wear that I knew so little about garments when I traveled to Salt Lake City in the summer of 1973. By that time, Leonard Arrington had been appointed as church historian and he had been instrumental in making it possible for me to have a fellowship underwriting an extended stint of research in the LDS Church Archives.

That was back, to put it charitably, in my casual phase. Except on days on which I had to teach, I mainly wore blue jeans. My wardrobe included few dresses of any kind and no summer dresses at all. As a result, in preparing to take up residence as a Church Historical Department fellow, I purchased three summer frocks. In Salt Lake City, I wore them sequentially, turning up in the archives in a dress every single day. On the last day before I returned to Indiana, several Latter-day Saint friends took me out for lunch. As we left the Church Historical Department, I turned to them and said, "Now aren't you guys proud of me? I've worn a dress to the archives every day. Nobody would ever know that I am not a Mormon."

They laughed and laughed. All three dresses were sleeveless, which meant that every Latter-day Saint entering the reading room knew that I was not wearing a garment. This peculiar experience was an eye-opener: it alerted me to how all sorts of giveaways reveal whether someone is (or is not) wearing a garment. At the same time it sent me home with additional insight into Mormon culture, for it disclosed to me how deep was the level of things I still did not know.

But my concern at the time was not with LDS culture. I was then engaged in a study of early Mormon history and dealing as best I could with the perplexing conundrum of where Mormonism fits into the Judeo-Christian landscape. For years after I spent that summer research stint in Utah, I paid little conscious attention to the business of how Saints tell the world and tell each other who they are. An invitation to deliver this year's Arrington lecture provided me with an occasion for revisiting this matter of how the members of the restored Church of Christ led by the Prophet Joseph Smith started sending signals that, while Christian, theirs was a church that differed from every other church on the earth.

The best way to begin the less personal and more formal part of what I have to say is to direct your attention back to the early years of the church,

prompting you to remember why it was the members of the church led by the Mormon prophet so desperately needed to find identifiers that would separate them from every other form of Christianity in the nation.

The “burned-over district” is the way many scholars describe the situation in western New York where the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints got its start. Surely they are correct, but the confusion obtaining on the American religious landscape was by no means limited to that particular geographical area. In the wake of the addition of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the disestablishment of religion at the federal level and similar disestablishment at the state level that ensued during the following forty years, all legal distinctions between an established church and sectarian bodies disappeared in the United States.¹⁰ What was left, as Laurence Moore put it in a fascinating book that he called *Selling God*, was a religious marketplace in which all faith communities were compelled to locate themselves.¹¹ Naturally, this was easier for the church bodies that had been present in the nation from the colonial period forward than it was for recently formed church bodies. It was especially difficult for any new group whose doctrinal claims appeared, at least from the outside, not to differ significantly from other new groups.

In particular, the appearance on the scene of two churches claiming to be restorations of New Testament Christianity caused considerable bewilderment. The church that would give rise to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Community of Christ, and several other Mormonisms, had to contend with the Campbellite restoration movement, which established an institution that was also called the Church of Christ. It was founded in the very same year that the Saints’ then Church of Christ was formally organized. In addition, the followers of the Mormon prophet had to contend with the Baptists who also believed that their institution was the true church of Christ.

Such a profusion of churches that named themselves after Jesus exacerbated the religious turmoil on the American scene. This is revealed in a passage from the journal of William E. McLellin written on April 16, 1833. McLellin and his companion, missionaries of the Church of Christ led by Joseph Smith, had converted a Sister White and were about to baptize her. But when “Sister White was ready to go into the water [a] Mr. Peck [a Baptist minister] hailed her as a Sister and urged her not to throw herself away or out of the church of Christ, as he called it.”¹²

Despite such confusion—the same sort of confusion that led young Joseph Smith to inquire of the Lord as to which church was true—the members of the church organized after the publication of the Book of Mormon were convinced that theirs was the real New Testament church. They believed the true church had been lost from the second century until it was restored through the prophet's agency, and they were sure that this gave them special access to the bequest made to the early Christians in 1 Peter 2:9, a bequest that let them understand themselves as

- a chosen generation
- a royal priesthood
- a holy nation
- a peculiar people

Unlike the members of most other Christian groups who treated this heritage symbolically, the followers of the Mormon prophet put on these titles quite literally. As the first Saints in a new dispensation, they became the very embodiment of a chosen generation. Their birthrights as chosen people were secured by revelation, and they had a "royal" priesthood. Moreover, those Saints who accepted the leadership of Brigham Young and followed him West established themselves as a holy nation. They constructed a "kingdom in the tops of the mountains," naming their holy nation the State of Deseret.

More to the point of specific interest here, they not only believed with all their hearts, but with action visible to those within and without the church, they also sustained revelations that led to the adoption of a set of unique practices—particularly plural marriage and abiding by the Word of Wisdom—that made their existence as a peculiar people operational. Their atypical patterns of behavior and singular religious practices worked as peculiarity is intended to work. Theirs was still the Church of Christ, but it was not simply the doctrines and the manner of their church organization that set them apart from all other Christians. Their distinctive practices also set the Saints apart, separating them from everyone else on the basis of culture as well as religion.

Unfortunately for them, the Saints were too sanguine about what the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees as far as religion is concerned. It provides a warrant for religious freedom, but it also ensures freedom from religion, making ours a nation that both values

faith and is deeply suspicious of it. As a result, Americans are tolerant of people who are a little bit peculiar, but they are not tolerant of a genuinely peculiar people. The Saints' kingdom-making and odd marital arrangements made for too much peculiarity. As a consequence, these U.S. citizens living in the Great Basin became so alien in the land of their tradition's birth that they were forced to relinquish the practice of plural marriage and to dismantle their holy nation.

After the decision in the famed Reynolds case, in which it was argued that under the First Amendment guarantee of free exercise of religion the practice of plural marriage was legal, it became settled law that religious belief did not come under the purview of the government but that religious practice could not contravene civil law.¹³ This constitutional settlement allowed the preservation of LDS doctrines and church organization but stopped some of the practices through which the Saints signified their acceptance of revealed doctrines. That makes a study of the practices that did not contravene civil law more important than it might otherwise be.

Before addressing the topic of the importance of plural marriage as the practice that more than any other signified Sainthood throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, I need to take up the matter of the naming problem that has plagued the followers of the latter-day prophets since the early 1830s. The initial confusion generated by the existence of several churches with essentially the same name—the Church of Christ or the Church of Jesus Christ—led the Saints to set their ecclesiastical organization apart by calling it the Church of the Latter-day Saints.¹⁴ Apparently, a desire to deter people from calling their church the “Mormon Church” and its members “Mormonites” figured in the decision to change the church's name. The change failed to banish the nickname. But the new name was distinctive. As used on the title page of the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, which reads “the Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints carefully selected from the Revelations of God,” the name did more than set the Saints' church apart from other churches. It bespoke the institution's claim to being a millennial movement by naming its members Saints who were living in the “latter days.” The title page also stated the claim that the church was in receipt of divine revelation.

For all that, the new name apparently bothered some of the members of the church who had been attracted to it because they were certain that

it was the “primitive” New Testament church and equally certain that it should bear the name of Jesus Christ. For example, although saying for certain how much the name change figured in his disillusionment with Mormonism is impossible, long after Apostle William McLellin was no longer connected to the church he wrote vehemently against the name change.¹⁵ How many others were distressed by the name change is hard to determine.

One reason may be that any disappointment with a name for the church that did not assert that it was the Church of Jesus Christ was short lived. The 1835 D&C nomenclature was supplanted on April 26, 1838, when the Prophet Joseph Smith proclaimed receipt of a revelation specifying that the church’s official name would be “the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

Although never formally recognized as an alternative designation, something curious happened to the church’s nickname. Joseph Smith turned pejorative references to Mormonism inside out by declaring “that Mormonism is truth and every man who embraced it felt himself at liberty to embrace every truth: consequently the shackles of superstition, bigotry, ignorance and priestcraft falls at once from his neck and his eyes are opened to see the truth. . . .” The derogatory designation “Mormonite” was likewise undermined as the prophet started to refer to his followers as the “Mormon people.”¹⁶ Glorifying in the way the name reflected the Saints’ acceptance of the Book of Mormon as an additional testament of Christ’s life, church members made the “Mormon Church” a popular descriptor of the Saints’ ecclesiastical organization. Turning the “Mormonite” designation on its head, many Saints became quite comfortable calling themselves members of the Mormon Church.

In a related verbal move, this one reflecting revelations about the Saints being “a chosen generation,” a “chosen people” with patriarchal blessings that identified them as members of the House of Israel, members of the church led by the Mormon prophet began to designate persons of other faiths (and those of no faith) as “Gentile.” Because the Saints responded to revelation by “gathering” into enclaves so that they could be protected the same way baby chickens are protected when they are gathered under a hen’s wing, it was easy to speak of outsiders as Gentile. When the Saints subsequently suffered persecution, this verbal signal became more powerful because it reminded the Saints of their

own chosen status while reassuring them that those opposing them stood outside the protection of the Almighty.¹⁷

The nomenclature skirmishes continue unabated. In the spring of 2001, the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued instructions to church members that the Mormon Church designation should be abandoned in favor of the church's official name.¹⁸ On the church's web site, the same terminology instruction was given to the members of the press. Journalists and others writing about the church were further advised that "on second reference" the church should not be called the "LDS Church." "The Church of Jesus Christ," or simply "The Church" (capital "T" capital "C") is the currently approved designation.¹⁹

For decades, now, the use of the term Gentile for a person who is not a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been officially discouraged. Indicating their negative status vis-à-vis Mormonism, such persons were, instead, "non-Mormon" or "non-member." In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints semi-annual conference in October, 2001, two apostles and the presiding bishop made it clear that even that shorthand negation of membership is now being abandoned in favor of "persons of other faiths" or, more simply, "neighbors."²⁰ The foremost expression of concern about finding ways to define non-Mormons in affirmative terms came in the address of Apostle Russell M. Ballard, but Bishop David Burton reiterated the general concern about being sensitive to the feelings of those not of the Saints' faith with a warning that "our unique Church language can be misinterpreted and appear insensitive or even condescending to our neighbors."²¹ With such authoritative advice to the Saints, the church seems to be encouraging the casting off of verbal signals of otherness, thereby moving away from the church's traditional position that, in compliance with 1 Peter 2: 9, the Saints should identify themselves as a "peculiar people." But with a certain note of resignation, these addresses recognized that many outsiders regard the Saints as peculiar, implying—at least to this observer—that it might be wise for church members to refrain from public assertions that they are a peculiar people.

Elder Burton did not advocate a cessation of church members' efforts to "keep themselves 'unspotted' from the world." Indeed, that was the burden of his message, as it is the burden of most conference talks. With their many references to upright behavior, what the church's General Authorities seem to be collectively saying is that church members should

identify themselves as Latter-day Saints and set themselves apart through practices (i.e., actions) rather than with verbal claims. If the Saints follow this advice—and surely most of them will—it will not lead to much that is entirely new. Between the adoption in 1838 of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the church’s correct name pursuant to revelation and the recent flurry of instructions to church members and to the press concerning what its members should be called and should call themselves, Latter-day Saints have been using all sorts of nonverbal signs to mark themselves as a peculiar people.

Ever since the anthropologist Clifford Geertz analyzed that Balinese cock fight at the beginning of his distinguished career, observers of distinct cultures have been developing catalogs of cultural signifiers.²² At their most evident, cultural signifiers center on the following:

- ritual actions that have a public dimension
- what persons put in—and what they do not put into—their bodies (dietary restrictions)
- what persons do with (and to) their bodies
- how persons clothe and groom themselves
- familial structures

When cultures are organized around religion, rituals assume a central place in the creation of cultural identifiers. The rituals themselves can be markers of identity as well as occasions for worship and contemplation because those who participate regularly send one type of signal while those who participate rarely or not at all send an entirely different kind of signal. Both have the potential of being read by insiders and outsiders alike. This is obvious enough in the case of attending sacrament meetings, Sunday school, gatherings of the priesthood and relief society in adulthood, and age-appropriate gatherings during childhood and adolescence.

Although such active participation in ritual activity often becomes habitual, individual volition—what the Saints call agency—makes participation a conscious choice, at least as far as older adolescents and adults are concerned. All sorts of motivation enters into the choices Saints make about participating. Desires to worship and to be a part of the community are both important. But at those points in their lives when such motivation is weak or altogether lacking, Latter-day Saints

must decide whether they will do the Mormon thing and go or whether they will stay away. Hence it is obvious that engaging in public ritual activity sends a conscious message in two directions, one goes to the outside world and the other to the Latter-day Saint community.

The contraction of the church's main public ritual activity to a three-hour block on Sundays diminished the pattern of virtually perpetual weekday church activity dramatically. A number of traditional activities for youth such as annual road shows were also discontinued. But the Saints still celebrate Pioneer Day on July 24 and hold onto their past in a variety of unofficial (yet obviously Mormon) activities, the re-enactment of the pioneer trek and the sea journey across the Atlantic being the most visible.²³ Participation in activities such as these last, as well as making individual and family treks to Mormon historical sites, are not merely the outcome of conscious decision making. They require careful planning and considerable financial expenditure.

Other forms of ritual behavior are less conscious, but equally (and possibly even more) important in the identity creation that leads individuals to signify their Sainthood without realizing they are doing so. In Mormonism, one such form that becomes a significant sign of being Mormon is how, during public prayer, Saints earmark themselves as followers of the prophet. Many very young Mormons first meet this form of ritual behavior in a family setting when, at table, a blessing on the food precedes mealtime. Learning to cross their arms across their breasts long before they learn to bow their heads, toddlers (and even pre-toddlers still eating in high chairs) incorporate a learned ritual behavior into their understandings of the way things are in the world they inhabit as they use their physical muscles to place their hands and arms in the correct position before the blessing commences.

They quickly learn, as well, to use their vocal chords to close the ritual by articulating aloud the sounds that will become "In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen." Although the content of their prayers will change as they mature, so ingrained is this ritual behavior that it seems entirely natural. As a result, Latter-day Saints grow from childhood through adolescence to adulthood praying in public in much the same way, thereby broadcasting signals of their Sainthood to one and all. It should not be surprising that this distinctive manner of praying seems innate, so proper to anyone who was reared as a Latter-day Saint that even those who leave

the church and physically remove themselves from the Mormon culture region find themselves automatically exercising the same arm movements as they prepare themselves for public prayer. Those individuals likewise find themselves saying “Amen” aloud in surroundings where this practice is not only not observed, but also regarded as distinctly eccentric. Converts to Mormonism, on the other hand, usually adopt this distinctive form of prayer early in their move toward becoming a part of Latter-day Saint culture.

Although the remainder of what I have to say will concentrate more on the next three types of signifiers, for one trained in history addressing the topic of signifying Sainthood without reference to familial structure would be absolutely foolhardy. Plural marriage—or polygamy as outsiders described it—was the preeminent signal of Sainthood in the nineteenth century. It was not necessary for a member of the Mormon community to be directly involved in the practice of plural marriage for it to be a signifier. Merely accepting the legitimacy of the practice was enough to set a Saint apart from the larger culture. This was so much the case that the practice of plural marriage erected what amounted to a barrier around the culture which, as Mark Twain pointed out in the appendix to *Roughing It*, had somehow to be transgressed in order to enter the Kingdom of the Saints. That form of marriage was a cultural identity marker par excellence. Its demise changed the world in which the Saints lived.²⁴

Today’s LDS family structure is likewise an important marker of Sainthood, especially with regard to numbers of children and the closeness of families. Cars with bumper stickers that read “Happiness is a Family Home Evening” (a popular item in the 1970s and 80s) were as effective in marking their occupants as Saints as are cars with bumper stickers that read “In case of the Rapture this car will be unoccupied.” In the latter, the occupants will be members of the Christian Right, which brings up a problem about seeing today’s Mormon family structure as a cultural identifier.

Family size works as a signifier inside the LDS community because Saints always seem to be looking to see how many children per family there are. Moreover—and this is a dead giveaway of cultural signifiers—large families are a staple of intra-cultural Mormon humor.²⁵ For example,



Utah State Historical Society.

Question: How do you know that you're at a Mormon wedding?

Answer: Because the bride is not pregnant. But her mother is.

Question: Why do Mormons stop having kids at 35?

Answer: Because 36 is too many.

In addition, Saints also seem to want to know whether the Mother is a stay-at-home Mom.

From the outside, however, domestic Mormonism at the beginning of the twenty-first century is not very different from domestic Evangelicalism or domestic Fundamentalism.²⁶ Those forms of Protestantism have ideals for families that are almost identical to the ideals Latter-day Saints have for families, which means that using the family as a signifier of Sainthood nowadays doesn't work as well as other signs of membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Take the prohibition against tattooing and mutilation, for instance. These are practices that once were associated with the exotic tribes of central Africa and far-away Borneo, whose members adorned their bodies

with trinkets that fit into pierced ears, eyebrows, tongues, navels, and other body parts. In the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, *National Geographic* magazine published numerous articles accompanied by color photographs of persons who engaged in what, in those days, seemed alien modes of decoration. Readers of the text of such articles learned that body piercing was not merely decorative, but that it was a means of dispensing information, sending signs of who the pictured individuals were, what tribe they belonged to, and what their positions were in those tribes. While it is likely that not all readers of *National Geographic* made the connection between exotic bodily mutilation and circumcision, the latter practice is a form of bodily mutilation which has, virtually since time began, had tremendous significance within the Hebraic religious tradition.²⁷

Since the 1960s when such practices were adopted by the counter culture, the practice of bodily mutilation that once appeared so strange, even outlandish, has become commonplace in American culture. While I am aware of no systematic reading of the meaning of body piercings and tattooing among the nation's younger generation, there are enough graduate students pursuing degrees in anthropology to say that it is bound to come. When it does, researchers are not likely to point to bodily mutilation as a cultural signifier much used among the Saints. Indeed, a repetition of the church's warning against body piercing was included in the conference advice the Saints received in the 171st General Conference in October 2001.

On the other hand, as my earlier discussion of the Word of Wisdom indicated, dietary rules have been remarkably conspicuous as signs of being part of Mormon culture. Two important points need to be made about the Word of Wisdom, however. One has been made many times by many scholars, including Leonard Arrington.²⁸ The importance of keeping the Word of Wisdom has varied across LDS history. At some junctures, not smoking and not drinking intoxicating stimulants, including coffee, has been a less insistent signal of being Mormon than at other points in time. Those things were very important in the 1830s, although the Word of Wisdom was often honored more in the breach than in the observance, even by leaders of the Mormon community. But during the kingdom period, when plural marriage, that sine qua non of Sainthood, was publicly practiced, the Saints who were busy building the kingdom, marrying into plurality, and digging irrigation ditches that washed away

time and time again, did not always need to send other powerful signs of belonging. They were Saints. As that period drew to a close, however, keeping the Word of Wisdom, along with tithing, practically became the premier signal of membership in the community of Saints.

An indicator of its importance is the history of church president Heber J. Grant's public pronouncements. He often said that in all his life as a Mormon leader, he had never failed to mention the need to keep the Word of Wisdom in talks to the Saints. This included talks given at the branch and ward level as well as conference talks.²⁹ It is therefore not at all surprising that Grant would have been so adamantly opposed, in 1909 and subsequently, to the anti-prohibition policy which prevailed in the Republican Party before World War I.³⁰ He welcomed the arrival of prohibition when it came in the form of a constitutional amendment and was adamantly opposed to the repeal of that amendment. How he must have cringed when the vote of Utahans sealed the ratification of repeal.

Throughout the twentieth century, the significance of the Word of Wisdom as signifier of being Mormon increased after the passage of repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment legitimated social drinking in the larger culture. Within the Utah-Mormon community, its worth as a signifier of orthodox LDS status increased almost exponentially when the prohibition against the consumption of coffee and tea was extended, although never officially, to any beverage containing caffeine. Not only did the church's position on liquor laws become an ever-present symbol to outsiders that Utah is a Mormon state, the prohibition against the sale of soda pop that contained caffeine practically became the symbol that Brigham Young University is a church-owned institution. Naturally, this prohibition was put in place as soon as the cafeteria in the newly constructed Church Office Building opened—something I remember particularly from my time as a summer fellow in the Church Archives. A suggestion box had been placed outside the door of the cafeteria, and Leonard Arrington once said to me, only half in jest, “Jan, why don't you put in a suggestion that Coke be made available for sale in the cafeteria?”

That “only half in jest” is a reminder that it is impossible to adequately consider the Word of Wisdom as cultural signifier without taking into account the extent to which the practice of the Word of Wisdom tends to divide the sheep from the goats inside the Mormon community. No wonder that Saints never acknowledge each other when they meet in the

liquor store and no wonder the millennium has been defined as that point in time when Saints drink coffee in front of each other. A Saint's standing as orthodox would likely not be destroyed, but it would surely be undercut by repeated instances of ordering coffee or wine in public venues.

This reality points to something mentioned earlier, but something that needs particular emphasis. Signs that are used to signify Sainthood are not simply signs to the outside world. They are likewise internal signs indicating the position of the Saints within the community.

Such signs go far beyond tangible actions such as what is consumed and what is not consumed.

Moving beyond dietary restrictions, about which much more could be said, take the issue of how persons clothe and groom themselves. In Mormonism, as suggested above, the wearing of the post-Endowment temple garment is an extremely important way of signifying Sainthood. But unlike the wearing of a yarmulke by a Jewish man, which is a very public sign of membership in the Jewish community, the wearing of garments is a private sign of commitment. It may be read by others, especially other Saints who know how to interpret subtle clues that a garment is being worn. But the intent in wearing a garment is not to send a signal of membership to anyone. Rather, it is a sign intended to remind Saints of the commitments they made in the temple.

Clothing and other decoration—jewelry, for example—and, equally important, grooming are a more public means of establishing Latter-day Saint identity. This is most easily observed by outsiders in the appearance of missionaries whose dress and grooming (along with their distinctive signage) identifies them as representatives of the church. Outsiders may not know that a Saintly appearance is equally critical in establishing place within the LDS community.

The pattern of approved dress for missionaries, both men and women, carries over into the culture, so much so that a man's donning of a white shirt and a tie for sacrament meeting is practically a sure sign of orthodoxy. This appears to be changing, especially in places outside the Mormon culture region. But for a long time a man's attendance at Sunday meetings in a ward wearing a colored shirt and sports coat caused ward members to worry about his straying from the fold. Even now, facial hair and hair left to grow below the ears are signals that can cause concern on the part of



White shirts, suits, and ties at a meeting of Mormon men. *LDS Church Archives*.

local church leaders about the strength of a Mormon man's testimony. For women, the pattern is less clear cut. What is called for is modest dress.

A similar situation prevails for teenagers. The wearing of a white shirt and tie, requisite for the deacons who serve the sacrament, sets the standard for adolescent males.³¹ The standard for females is less exacting, but the "Britney Spears" look is to be avoided at all costs. On the other hand, teenagers have the possibility of signaling who they are with a means that is not quite so appropriate for adults. Jewelry featuring the initials "CTR" (Choose the Right) is a virtual insignia of membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In a fascinating *Sunstone* article, Jana Reiss classified CTR jewelry and other regalia as Mormon "kitsch," which the dictionary defines as something of tawdry design, appearance, or content created to appeal to popular or indiscriminating taste. Surely, she is absolutely correct at some level.³² Yet such adornment is more than kitsch, for it explains to other

young Saints as well as to those in the larger public who watch for signs of identity that here is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Young members of conservative Protestant groups have a similar insignia, only the initials that decorate their bracelets, necklaces, rings, and so on are “WWJD,” an acrostic abbreviation for “What would Jesus do?” Because so much emphasis is placed on Jesus in current LDS materials as well as in the church generally, some Deseret Book Store buyer apparently concluded there might be a brisk sale of WWJD items to young Latter-day Saints. But a recent interview with a salesperson in the “CTR” section of the main Deseret Book Store in Salt Lake City’s Crossroads Mall indicated that the WWJD merchandise they had ordered did not sell well. She had not seen any for sale for months, maybe for a year or more.

This matter of cultural signifiers is so rich that it is impossible in a single lecture even to mention many of the ways in which members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints signify their standing as active participants in the life of the institution or inactive members of the church who are nevertheless full-scale participants in the Mormon culture of the intermountain West. Included here is an appendix with a list of additional verbal and physical emblems that send identity messages to persons both in and outside the Mormon community. At the same time, readers of this lecture are challenged to start making their own lists of cultural identifiers.

Now, at the end, I will return to the matter of the primary purpose of signifiers, which is the maintaining of boundaries that make possible the continuing existence of a community of peculiar people. This is so critically important that unless the Saints manage to do this—unless the community manages to maintain its separateness while the church places itself within the larger ecumenical universe—it is quite possible that Mormonism could become so assimilated into the larger Christian world that it could become little more than an idiosyncratic denomination.

Such private signifiers as wearing temple garments will continue to remind Saints that they must, individually, keep themselves unspotted from the world. But just as family structure does not discriminate so well between Latter-day Saints, Roman Catholics, and conservative Protestants as it once did, it is this observer’s conclusion that the public signification



CTR (Choose the Right) ring. *Museum of Church History and Art.*

once provided by the Word of Wisdom is unlikely to continue setting the Saints apart. The reason is that the culture outside Mormondom has changed so much.

In light of what is now known about what tobacco does to the body, anyone with good sense no longer smokes. Moreover, while not consuming alcohol was definitely a boundary marker in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s when cocktail parties were a preferred form of entertaining and hard liquor flowed, as they say, like wine, nowadays the cocktail party has almost entirely been superseded, at least in academic circles, by social occasions where the liquid fare is beer, wine, and “designer water.” At many of these affairs, nearly half the people choose one of the brands of designer water. As for coffee, the latest news is that caffeine increases the level of cholesterol in the blood.

Therefore, this particular long-time holdout against the notion of abiding by the Word of Wisdom is reduced, mainly for health reasons, to an occasional glass of wine. And whatever we might be called—Gentiles, non-Mormons, non-members, neighbors, or persons of other faiths—there are so many of us out there beyond the pale who are health

conscious that keeping the Word of Wisdom is unlikely to ever again be the Mormon distinctive it used to be.

For quite different reasons, the teenagers' CTR badge of being Mormon could well disappear in the wake of the changes in Mormonism that are wrought by the fact that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is now a worldwide church. The obvious reason is linguistic. Only in English does CTR work as a "choose the right" acrostic. In Spanish the expression would be *coje el derecho*, which would make the acrostic CED; in French the abbreviation would be CLD, and so on. While young missionaries in some parts of the world are finding Sainthood entrepreneurs to create rings and other jewelry on which a translation of choose the right is inscribed, it seems likely that a more universal signifier will eventually appear on the horizon.³³

Remember, however, that earlier I noted how rituals frequently assume a central place in the creation of cultural identifiers when cultures are organized around religion. Besides the Book of Mormon as an additional scripture, the other true Latter-day Saint distinctive—and here I deliberately selected the singular rather than plural form of this word—is the temple and the rituals that are performed therein. Consequently I am persuaded that Sainthood increasingly will be signified by things connected with Latter-day Saint temples.

This is already happening. Even now, the hanging of the requisite (and ubiquitous) picture of a temple on the walls of the homes that Saints inhabit is a means of signifying Sainthood, saying to all who enter that "Saints live here." Not merely doing genealogy—which everyone seems to be doing—but the temple work that is directly connected to genealogical endeavors is assuming profound cultural as well as religious significance. As a project that leads to the creation of what Saints describe as "eternal families," this activity is a way of reclaiming the uniqueness of Mormon family structure, thereby preserving the notion of both individuals and families being part of a peculiar people.

Temple-related endeavors are likely to preserve and extend that perception of peculiarity since, with the construction of new temples all across the nation and around the globe, going to the temple to participate in the ancient ordinances that set Saints apart from all other Christians is becoming, for an ever-increasing number of Mormons, more of a regular practice than an occasional activity. This is altering the sectoring patterns

within Mormon communities, where once the most compelling agents of division were whether people in the LDS cultural universe were birthright Saints as opposed to converts and, within the choice world of birthright Saints, whether individuals could establish connections to the pioneer generation. The eradication of those dividing lines will be long in coming, and they may never disappear completely.

Yet the emergence of the crucial salience of the temple within Mormonism means that, as time goes on, the possession of a temple recommend will very likely become the primary means of separating the sheep from the goats inside the Mormon fold. If, or more likely when, this occurs, it is probable that the role of traditional signifiers of Sainthood will diminish. This might well be happening in any case as Mormonism is making itself at home in a large number of diverse cultures. And while distinctive cultural signs of being Mormon will not altogether disappear, the import of those traditional signs of being Mormon will decrease. What this suggests to this soon-to-be aged historian is that as far as signifying fellowship in the community of peculiar people, the balance may be shifting from the individual to the group.

As the importance of participation in temple rites accelerates, the recommends that local church authorities bestow will be an ever more critical factor in the relationship of ordinary Saints to the church and to the culture. Open questions for the twenty-first century: if bishops become the main arbiters of who fits where within the community of Saints as that community is located within the institution, will a new and very different Sainthood culture emerge to surround and nourish the church? If such a culture does emerge, will new verbal emblems and behavioral badges spring forth to signify Sainthood in the new world of Mormondom? If so, what are they likely to be?

Appendix:

A Few Additional Cultural Signifiers

- Displays of particular periodicals on LDS “Postum tables” often establish the place of Saints within the community. Having the *Ensign*, the *New Era*, and the *Church News* visible says one thing. Having *Dialogue*, *Sunstone*, and *Exponent II* visible says something entirely different.
- Interestingly, the display of the *Utah Historical Quarterly*, *BYU Studies*, and the *Journal of Mormon History* is less likely to send signals locating subscribers in one as opposed to another part of the LDS community.
- Conversations about “callings” often send signs about a Saints’ level of activity, as do discussions that indicate experience as a missionary.
- Some Saints are likely to display BYU bumper stickers and wear BYU sweatshirts whether or not they are alumni of this institution.
- In the nineteenth century, gathering with the Saints was a sure sign that individuals and families were Mormon. The gathering of retired persons to Utah sends the same signal nowadays. In fact, whether or not retired persons ever lived there when they were young, moving to Utah is a signifier that one is truly Mormon.
- The presence of a new Mormon temple in an area signifies a significant Mormon population in the region. Together these generate a “mini-Zion” culture with its visible signs of being Mormon.
- Although the storage of a year’s supply of food is decreasing among the Saints, this is still a signal of commitment to Church teachings.
- In addition to pictures of temples on the walls of Mormon homes, another distinctive symbolic image is a picture of the current prophet

or First Presidency somewhere in the home. Many Saints are now placing pictures of Jesus on the wall, but these are in no way an obvious Mormon distinctive.

- Carrying the scriptures to church is a general practice among the Saints. This same pattern of behavior is present in many Protestant churches, especially the more conservative ones. But Protestants only carry the King James version of the Bible, not the Bible bound together with the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price.

Endnotes

1. Virginia Sorenson, *A Little Lower Than the Angels* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942).
2. Jan Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000). “Passages,” the epilogue to this work, includes a much more extended account of our family’s journey across the country from Detroit to Logan.
3. Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958; pap. ed., University of Utah Press, 1993).
4. Joel E. Ricks (1889–1974) was a member of the one of the original families that settled Logan in the 1850s and 1860s. Along with Leland Creer, Levi Edgar Young, and Andrew Love Neff, he became one of the earliest “credentialed” historians of Mormonism. His dissertation, “Forms and Methods of Early Settlement in Utah and the Surrounding Region, 1847–77,” completed at the University of Chicago in 1930, was strongly influenced by Frederick Jackson Turner, who taught history in summer sessions at Utah State University in 1924 and 1925. Ricks’s dissertation was published by the Utah State University Press in 1964. With Everett L. Cooley, Ricks edited *The History of a Valley: Cache Valley, Utah-Idaho* (Logan: Cache Valley Centennial Commission, 1956).
5. This essay, pivotal in the study of the history of the American West, was delivered at the 1893 annual meeting of the American Historical Association, which was held that year at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. It was reprinted later that year by the American Historical Association and has been reprinted many times since then.
6. A substantial literature on the Word of Wisdom exists. A good place to start is Joseph Lynn Lyon’s entry on this topic in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. by Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., 1992), 4: 1584–85. See also, Leonard J. Arrington, “An Economic Interpretation of the ‘Word of Wisdom,’” *BYU Studies* 1 (Winter 1959): 37–49; and Paul H. Peterson, “An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972). A full bibliography of this literature is included in James B. Allen, Ronald W. Walker, and David J. Whittaker, *Studies in Mormon History, 1830–1997: An Indexed Bibliography* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 1040–41.
7. Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: The Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1967); Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966).
8. In addition to his *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1965), Robert Flanders was a co-editor of *The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1973). He is also the author of several thoughtful essays about the writing of Mormon history that were published in *Dialogue*.
9. For a long time, materials about LDS garments published by Latter-day Saints did not provide much specific descriptive information about their style or construction. The entry on garments in Bruce R. McConkie’s popular *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958, 1966) does not even go that far, simply explaining that “garments are various articles of clothing used to dress the body”; indicating that they may be worn for religious as well as utilitarian purposes; and providing scriptural references to make it clear that the Saints are aware that “clean garments are a sign of cleanliness, perfection, and salvation.” Evelyn T.

Marshall's entry in the quasi-official *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* edited by Daniel H. Ludlow gives enough information to let the reader know that ceremonial undergarments are worn by the Saints. But it, too, is fairly opaque.

This does not mean that finding information about garments is difficult. The story of their introduction and how they changed in 1923 is fully told in the chapter on "The Twentieth-Century Temple" in David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994), 133–71. A substantial chapter, "Mormon Garments: Sacred Clothing and the Body" is included in Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 198–221. See also Helen Beach Cannon's "Personal Voices" essay, "Sacred Clothing: An Inside-Outside Perspective," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 25, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 138–48.

10. The formal separation of church and state came about much more slowly than most people realize, and the informal separation took nearly a century. The fight against polygamy was a part of the informal separation process. See Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
11. R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
12. William E. McLellin, *Journals, 1831–1836*, ed. by Jan Shippy and John W. Welch (Provo, UT and Urbana, IL: *BYU Studies* and Univ. of Illinois Press, 1994), 115.
13. *Reynolds v. United States*, 98 U.S. 167, 164 (1879).
14. This name for the church was announced on May 3, 1834. In an address to the members of "Zion's Camp," the band of Saints who followed Joseph Smith to Missouri in an attempt to come to the aid of the members of the church who had been driven out of Independence, Sidney Rigdon said that the idea for the name had been his, but that the High Council had agreed that this should be the church's new name. See Fawn McKay Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 147. See Susan Easton Black, "Name of the Church," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* 3: 979.
15. "The Name of the Church," *Ensign of Liberty* 3: 20–24.
16. Letter from Joseph Smith to Isaac Galland, March 22, 1839 printed in *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, compiled and edited by Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 419.
17. "From Gentile to Non-Mormon: Mormon Perceptions of the Other," in Shippy, *Sojourner in the Promised Land*, 124–42.
18. The advice from the First Presidency to this effect came in a February 23, 2001 letter that was read from the stand in the church's stakes and wards. That this announcement was pending was announced ahead of time in a February 20 *New York Times* story written by religion writer Gustav Niebuhr. Niebuhr obtained his advance information in an interview with Apostle Dallin H. Oaks. See also Shippy, "That 'M' Word" (Feb 17, 2001) and "Mormons, In; 'Mormon Church,' Out" (Mar 28, 2001). These columns both appeared on Beliefnet, a web site that covers religion (http://www.beliefnet.com/author/author_55.html).
19. The church's official style guide says, "While the term 'Mormon Church' has long been publicly applied to the Church as a nickname, it is not an authorized title and the Church discourages its use." A notice at the foot of the page on official news releases reads: "When reporting about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, please use the complete name of the Church in the first reference. For a subsequent reference, the full name or the contractions 'the Church of Jesus Christ' or 'The Church' are appropriate."

A certain irony exists with regard to the church's latest official web site which is specifically designed for those who are interested in learning more about the basic doctrines, teachings, history and organization of the church. Its web address is www.Mormon.org.

A review of the coverage of Mormonism in the run up to the Olympic Games that were held in Salt Lake City (February 8–18, 2002) as well as coverage during the games indicates

- that members of the press generally ignored instructions about avoiding the use of “Mormon Church” and “LDS Church.”
20. “Doctrine of Inclusion,” talk given by at the General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by Russell M. Ballard, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, and “Sharing the Gospel,” talk given by at the General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. Both talks were presented in the October 6 morning session of the 2001 General Conference.
 21. “Standing Tall,” talk given at the October 7 morning session of the 2001 General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by David H Burton, the church’s presiding bishop.
 22. Ethnographer Clifford Geertz is best known for his studies of Javanese culture and for his writings on the interpretation of culture, by which title his well-known 1973 volume published by Basic Books is known. A faculty member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University, he is one of the most influential thinkers in academia today. In the American Council of Learned Societies Charles Haskings Lecture for 1999, Geertz describes the route by which he became an anthropologist and specialist on Javanese religion.
 23. Davis Bitton, “The Ritualization of Mormon History,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43 (Winter 1975), 67–85, revised and republished in *The Ritualization of Mormon History and Other Essays* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1994).
 24. Sarah Barringer’s Gordon’s *The Mormon Question* is only the latest in a long line of studies of various aspects of Mormon history that emphasize the extent to which polygamy was the emblematic cultural signifier of being Mormon in the nineteenth century. Earlier works include Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986, paperback edition with a foreword written by Stephen J. Stein, 1996); and *Things in Heaven and Earth: The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, a Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991); Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); and, pap. ed., *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Klaus J. Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); and Dennis L. Lythgoe, “The Changing Image of Mormonism in Periodical Literature” (Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1969).
 25. Joe Farofoli, “Take My Wives Please: All of Salt Lake’s a Stage as Mormons Show Off Self-Deprecating Humor,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, web edition, Wednesday, February 20, 2002.
 26. David Harrington Watt, “The Private Hopes of American Fundamentalists and Evangelicals, 1926–1975,” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 1 (Summer 1991) 2: 164–65.
 27. Circumcision of males has been widely practiced as a religious rite since ancient times. An initiatory rite of Judaism, circumcision is also practiced by Muslims, for whom it signifies spiritual purification. Although its origins are unknown, earliest evidence of the practice dates from ancient Egypt about 2300 b.c., where it is thought to have been used originally to mark male slaves. By the time of the Roman takeover of Egypt in 30 b.c., the practice had a ritual significance, and only circumcised priests could perform certain religious offices.
 28. Arrington, “An Economic Interpretation of the ‘Word of Wisdom,’” *BYU Studies* 1 (Winter 1959): 37–49; and “Have the Saints Always Given as Much Emphasis to the Word of Wisdom as They Do Today?” *Ensign* 7 (April 1977) 32, 33; Paul H. Peterson, “An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972).
 29. I knew many “Jack-Mormons” (a descriptor that has almost disappeared from the Mormon vocabulary) when we lived in Logan during the 1960–1961 academic year. In a long-ago conversation, I recall having heard that President Grant inveighed against the liquor and tobacco interests in every talk he gave. These memories are borne out by a cursory review of Grant’s talks recorded in the Conference Reports of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Sampling his remarks in all the conference session reports included on Signature

- Press's "New Mormon Studies CD Rom," I discovered that the Word of Wisdom was either a main topic or one mentioned several times in passing in nearly all of his addresses.
30. Shipps, "The Mormons in Politics: The First Hundred Years" (Ph.D. diss., University of Colorado, 1965). 275 ff. See also, the diaries of Senator Reed Smoot in which Grant's position vis-à-vis. prohibition is mentioned again and again in the diaries for the years between 1909 and 1917. Typescripts of these important documents are located in both the LDS Church Archives and in the manuscript collections in the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University. *In the World: The Diaries of Reed Smoot*, [abridged and] ed. by Harvard S. Heath (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997) is a scholarly edition of these diaries.
 31. This may be changing gradually. When I attended a sacrament meeting in a ward in an upper middle class section of Salt Lake City in March, 2002, I was astonished to see that one of the deacons who passed the sacrament was wearing a blue shirt. He nevertheless wore the requisite dark tie.
 32. Jana K. Reiss, "Stripling Warriors Choose the Right: The Cultural Engagements of Contemporary Mormon Kitsch," *Sunstone* 22 (June 1999) 2: 36–47.
 33. It is not impossible that the emphasis the church now places on the Atonement could lead to greater use within Mormonism of a cross as symbol of Christ's suffering, on the one hand, and commitment to the faith on the other. It is even possible that Mormon chapels will someday display crosses on their steeples. After all, for many generations Protestants avoided the placing of crosses on their church steeples for fear that a "Popish" symbol might be read as evidence of sympathy with Rome. Until the nineteenth century, steeples on Protestant churches in New England were all topped with weathervanes, most often weathervanes in the shape of roosters. Now many Protestant churches top their steeples with crosses.