



*Salt Lake City's Olympic Flame, 2002. More than three dozen articles in the Washington Post dealt with some aspect of "Mormons" and the "Olympics" in the years between 2000 and 2002. Washington Post report Hank Steuver summarized his coverage of the games by noting that the Mormons "looked golden" in 2002. Photo by Preston Keres.*



## ON THE PAGES OF THE *POST*: LATTER-DAY SAINTS AND WASHINGTON'S NEWSPAPER OF RECORD

**J. B. HAWS**

*J. B. Haws is an associate professor of Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University.*

Let's imagine a strangely specific hypothetical situation as a way of setting this up. Imagine a man waking up in a Washington, DC, hospital in the 1970s after suffering from amnesia. He has no memory of ever encountering "Mormons" before—and because he needs the constant scrutiny of interested doctors, and because, luckily, he is especially fond of hospital Jell-O, the decision is made to keep our imaginary patient in the hospital for the remainder of his life. His only contact with the outside world is a daily subscription to the *Washington Post*. The question at hand is this: What would our confined but comfortable and contented reader think about Latter-day Saints if his only source of information were the *Washington Post*?

The sheer absurdity of this scenario underscores just how impossible it is to focus exclusively on only one source of information when we think about the influences that shape our perceptions and opinions. Still, if we imagine the public image of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as something like a mosaic made up of numerous overlapping pieces, even examining one piece can be instructive in discerning how the entire image

was (and still is) created. The argument here is that the *Washington Post's* reporting on Latter-day Saints is just such a piece of the mosaic—and a significant one at that—for two broad reasons: the amount (and type) of coverage devoted to Latter-day Saints by the paper; and the prominent place that the paper itself occupies in the public arena—a position that is perhaps more prominent than ever, thanks to the vision of Jeff Bezos.<sup>1</sup>

Bezos, the billionaire founder of Amazon, purchased the *Post* in 2013. He told *CBS This Morning* two years later that “we’re working on becoming the new paper of record.”<sup>2</sup> Considering all that was happening in the newspaper world, thinking *bigger* was unexpected, to say the least. Despite hitting several journalistic homeruns in the 1970s (the Vietnam Papers, Watergate), the *Washington Post*—like all newspapers—faced new electronic curveballs in the 1990s. The internet changed everything. Newspaper circulation numbers fell across the nation, from 62.5 million paying daily newspaper subscribers in 1968 to 34.7 million in 2016; in the case of the *Washington Post*, the statistics were just as stark: its weekday circulation was 832,000 in 1993, but down to 432,000 in 2015. The bulk of newspapers’ advertising revenue stayed with print editions, but those print runs were shrinking. Newsroom staffs were gutted as newspapers across the country closed or merged with competitors. The question that was consistently asked as a digital world dawned was this: do newspapers even still matter?<sup>3</sup> In the midst of this floundering, Bezos infused new capital and focus into the *Post*, and it worked.<sup>4</sup>

A strong case can be made that the *Washington Post* matters as a source of public information now more than ever. Research shows that the *Post's* attention to its online platforms was paying off: in February 2016, for example, the *Washington Post* had more online hits (890.1 million page views) than did any other newspaper—even outpacing the *New York Times* that month (721.3 million)—landing second only to CNN.com among all news sites. (This itself was big news, since the *Post's* rivalry with the *New York Times* has been a running theme in the paper’s existence almost since the day the *Post* was founded in 1877.)<sup>5</sup> If all of this, taken together, makes the case for the cultural prominence of the *Washington Post*, what case does the *Washington Post* make for the public standing of Latter-day

Saints, as we try to put ourselves in the minds of readers who encounter this coverage?

Thanks to the comprehensiveness of search databases like LexisNexis and ProQuest, we can get a quick handle on the level of coverage the *Post* has devoted to Latter-day Saints. Between 1977 and early 2020, about 4,200 *Washington Post* articles included the word “Mormon.”<sup>6</sup> Importantly, that coverage has not come at a constant rate. Database graphs show a remarkable spike around the “Mormon Moment,” starting about 2007. And, of course, there is a wide range in that coverage, from one-line mentions of local Latter-day Saints in obituaries or wedding notices, to two-thousand-word features on local Latter-day Saint welfare farms or that “Mysterious Citadel on the Beltway”—the Church’s Washington D.C. Temple.<sup>7</sup> One gets the impression very quickly just how visible Latter-day Saints are in the local news scene in Washington, DC, and just how integrated they are in community affairs. That speaks, as other researchers have noted, to the way Latter-day Saints seek to be something of the leaven in the lump.<sup>8</sup> Here are two telling examples: In June 1981, a story appeared in which Catholic leaders encouraged their parishioners to follow the Latter-day Saints’ example of having a weekly family night.<sup>9</sup> And in November 1980 (in a time of rising suspicion against Muslims because of anti-Iranian sentiment), a Muslim community spokesman made the case for Muslims’ place in American society by saying “we would not be isolationists, but we would be like the Mormons.”<sup>10</sup> It says something that in looking to reassure the public, he saw in the Latter-day Saints the kind of comparison he wanted to make.

Yet the Latter-day Saint image in the American mind has always been a contested one. There always have appeared counterbalancing articles, like one in the *Post* in February 1978 that noted (as if it were common knowledge) that “Wahhabis,”—followers of a very conservative movement in Islam, prominent in Saudi Arabia—“it is often said, are the Mormons of the Middle East.”<sup>11</sup> Or take this unexpected account: a brief October 1977 police beat article noted that a man was found with 42 fishhooks stuck in his skin. Vincent Pervel claimed he had been abducted and assaulted. “Police said they are unsure whether the wounds were self-inflicted or whether they were inflicted by ‘three mysterious men’ who Pervel said

perpetrated the crime. According to police, Pervel said three men snagged each hook into his body after asking the question ‘Are you a Mormon?’” Police dropped the case when Pervel “refused to cooperate in the investigation,”<sup>12</sup> but the article itself is a subtle reminder that in many minds, a bit of weirdness will always be associated with the Latter-day Saints. (No one really wondered at the fact that President Gordon B. Hinckley felt compelled to say to *60 Minutes*’ Mike Wallace in 1996, “We’re not a weird people”!)<sup>13</sup>

With this sampling of *Washington Post* snapshots in mind, this essay proposes to do two things: discuss a handful of key case studies in which stories about the Church figured prominently on the pages of the *Washington Post*; and then ask what the history and nature of those stories—when taken together—can say about the place of Latter-day Saints on the public opinion landscape of the the United States, especially in the years since the “Mormon Moment” of the 2008 and 2012 presidential campaign seasons.

## **BEFORE THE MORMON MOMENT: THE 1970s TO THE EARLY 2000s**

One way to come at this is to consider that the golden age of the *Washington Post*—the 1970s and 1980s—came about one decade after “the golden era of Mormonism,” which is the felicitous phrase that a retired director of Church public affairs used to describe President David O. McKay’s tenure.<sup>14</sup> The two decades (roughly) of the 1950s through the early 1970s were a time when, as a number of observers have noted, American Latter-day Saints found themselves in lockstep with the general spirit of the times perhaps more so than at any other time before or since.<sup>15</sup>

But then the trend line tracing American public perception of Latter-day Saints changed. For one thing, American cultural norms began to diverge from the conservative family-centeredness that Latter-day Saints espoused. This divergence manifested itself in both politics and pop culture. A number of influential groups, both on the political left and the political right, grew more and more suspicious of Latter-day Saint prosperity and potential power.

Three episodes stand out as the one-two-three punches that left the Latter-day Saint image bruised in the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>16</sup> First, the Church came out in opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in the late 1970s and 1980s. Then the *God Makers* movie highlighted a resurgence of “anti-Mormon” polemics, especially in evangelical Christian circles. Finally, the tragedies surrounding forger-turned-murderer Mark Hofmann raised all kinds of questions about intrigue and secrecy in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All three episodes found their way onto the pages of the *Post*.

In 1978, 1979, and 1980, the Equal Rights Amendment and the “Mormons for ERA” leader Sonia Johnson were the Latter-day Saint–related topics that generated the greatest number of articles in the *Washington Post*. There were six ERA articles in 1978 that mentioned the Church, sixteen in 1979—including page one coverage of Sonia Johnson’s excommunication—and twenty-two in 1980, which represented fully 33 percent of that year’s mentions of Mormons (sixty-five articles) in the newspaper. Because Sonia Johnson was a northern Virginia local—and because ERA protests and counterdemonstrations so often took place in Washington—this level of coverage is not surprising; but it also reflected national attention to this issue and the persons involved. This is a complex story that deserves the extensive analysis it has received in other places, but one April 1980 headline in the *Washington Post* can serve to encapsulate the public perception impact of the ERA coverage: “Mormon Anti-ERA Money.”<sup>17</sup>

This headline—and other related coverage—introduced a new motif in reporting about the church: fear. In national stories about the Mormons and the ERA, there flowed an undercurrent of suspicion that the Latter-day Saint potential for political influence had gone underappreciated. The nineteenth-century bugaboo of theocratic aspirations still lurked.

This kind of suspicion, but on religious more than political grounds, drove the second of the aforementioned one-two-three punches: the rise of a new (and successful) brand of polemical, religiously focused materials (like the *God Makers* film) aimed at stemming the Latter-day Saints’ unsettling growth. Critics in the *God Makers* vein deemed the Latter-day Saints too close to what was, in these critics’ minds, authentic Christianity—and for these concerned critics, that’s what made the

## JACK ANDERSON

No discussion involving journalism, Latter-day Saints, and Washington, DC, would be complete without including Jack Anderson. He was a pioneering figure in twentieth-century investigative reporting. In his sixty years of reporting, he broke story after story—the CIA and the Mafia conspiring to kill Fidel Castro, the Iran-Contra affair, and a story about U.S. support for Pakistan over India that won Anderson the Pulitzer Prize in 1972, among many, many other scoops. When he died in late 2005, he was remembered for holding the distinction “for years . . . [of being] America’s most widely read columnist.”<sup>1</sup>

From his home base in Washington, he not only worked on the “Washington Merry-Go-Round” column for almost a half century, a column that eventually appeared in an astounding one thousand newspapers and had forty-five million readers every week, but he also hosted radio and television shows. He took over the column from Drew Pearson in 1969, who had hired a young Anderson twenty years earlier after Anderson had stints as a reporter in Utah for the *Deseret News* (first when he was twelve on the “Boy Scout” page), the *Salt Lake Tribune*, and as an army news reporter in China. Between reporting jobs, he served a two-year mission for the Church.

Religion mattered to Anderson, and colleagues knew he was a devout Latter-day Saint. Critics and supporters alike saw his strong sense of morality as deriving from his faith. Anderson also noted, in a darkly humorous way, that his large family—he and his wife, Olivia, had nine children—likely saved his life. So frustrated with Anderson’s dogged reporting did Richard Nixon and his inner circle become that several Nixon staffers bandied about some ideas on how they might get rid of him, including the possibility of slipping poison into Anderson’s aspirin bottle. However, Anderson noted, they were deterred by a worry that in a household with that many children, the chances of an inadvertent victim were just too high.<sup>2</sup>

Such was the life of one who felt called—and he did see his journalism profession as a “calling”—to “afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted.”<sup>3</sup>

## NOTES

1. Patricia Sullivan, “Investigative Columnist Jack Anderson Dies,” *Washington Post*, 18 December 2005, C08.
2. See Douglas Martin, “Jack Anderson, Investigative Journalist Who Angered the Powerful, Dies at 83,” *New York Times*, National Edition, 18 December 2005, section 1, p. 58. See also Jack Anderson’s retelling of the exploratory conversations between the potential perpetrators, in his book (with Daryl Gibson), *Peace, War, and Politics: An Eyewitness Account* (New York: Forge, 1999), 228–30. *Washington Post* reporter Bob Woodward broke the initial story of the plot in “Hunt Told Associates of Orders to Kill Jack Anderson,” *Washington Post*, 21 September 1975, A1. For one author’s analysis that this episode represented a turning point in the relationship between powerful politicians and the media, see Mark Feldstein, *Poisoning the Press: Richard Nixon, Jack Anderson, and the Rise of Washington’s Scandal Culture* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010).
3. Leigh Dethman and the Associated Press, “Jack Anderson, Columnist and Ex-Utahn, Dies,” *Deseret News*, 18 December 2005, A01.



Mormons-as-counterfeit-Christians so dangerous. A September 1981 *Washington Post* article carried this headline: “Pastors Act to ‘Save’ Flock from Mormons.” The article detailed how “five local ministers of various denominations sent out some forty-three hundred letters warning residents not to be misled by the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” One of the ministers said, “In common with many other cults, they use the same words as Christianity but attach different meaning to them.”<sup>18</sup> Any time the word *cult* appeared in the late 1970s and 80s, the descriptor carried a particularly negative potency because of the 1978 Jonestown mass suicide of over nine hundred individuals that was still very much in the national consciousness.

Hence, for some people, their distrust of Latter-day Saints turned into an apparent case of suspicions confirmed when violence and fanaticism seemed to manifest themselves in the breaking news of two bombing murders in Salt Lake City in October 1985. For the five years previous to that, Mark Hofmann, a covertly disaffected Latter-day Saint, had generated growing attention for a series of remarkable “finds” of important historical documents related to the Church’s founding. Those documents grew increasingly controversial, as they painted foundational events in new hues, often strange ones. After five years of grabbing headlines, Mark Hofmann perpetrated two heinous murders via package bombs. Investigators discerned that Hofmann was a master forger who had resorted to murder to cover his double-crossing tracks. However, what national media outlet after national media outlet reported was that the business of historical documents that threatened the Church’s standard narrative was serious enough that some people died because of their involvement. Words like “shadowy” and “secretive” became standard media descriptors of the Church and its leadership. The *Post* ran thirteen stories—some extensive—on Mark Hofmann. One headline from five days after the bombings can convey the feeling of the time: “Utah’s Mormon Community Transfixed by Bombing Incidents; Focus on Documents Heightens Sensitivity about Church Origins.”<sup>19</sup>

Trying to trace the trend lines of public opinion on Latter-day Saints is more impressionistic than precise—more like the pain scale at the doctor’s office. A lot is eye-of-the-beholder-type evaluation and assessment. Still, some broad trends do seem discernible. In 1977 a Gallup poll found that



54 percent of Americans surveyed responded that they viewed Mormons “very favorably” or “somewhat favorably.” In 1991 a Barna poll with a slightly different wording and metric approach found that only 27 percent of respondents rated Mormons favorably.<sup>20</sup> The one-two-three punches of the long 1980s had taken a toll.

Latter-day Saints would see the picture painted here as pretty bleak, yet another detectable trend over the past four decades has been what might be thought of as a public perception split: esteem for Latter-day Saint *individuals* in spite of distrust of the Latter-day Saint *institution*.<sup>21</sup> This individual-versus-institution divergence allowed for positive publicity for a number of prominent Latter-day Saints—and the spotlight they were under seemed to dispel some of the shadows surrounding the more suspect institution to which they belonged. It was this kind of coverage that signaled something of a new day in the mid-1990s, supported by the energetic leadership of President Gordon B. Hinckley. When he appeared for an extensive, unscripted interview on *60 Minutes* with Mike Wallace, something seemed to change. The *Washington Post* quoted Apostle Dallin H. Oaks: “If he [President Hinckley] can stand up to Mike Wallace, he can stand up to anybody,” Oaks said. Of the broadcast itself, the *Post* noted that Wallace “complimented and joked with Hinckley more than [Wallace] attacked.”<sup>22</sup>

Something *had* seemed to change. Charges of secretiveness and defensiveness waned. This changing of the winds of public perception coincided with two moments that brought unprecedented attention to the Church and its people: the 1997 sesquicentennial wagon train and the 2002 Winter Olympics. In June 1997 a two-thousand-word front-page feature came under this headline in the *Post*: “Latter-day Trek Honors Pilgrims.” The article noted that “this once-persecuted sect is one of the world’s fastest growing faiths.”<sup>23</sup> Apostle M. Russell Ballard captured the sense of Latter-day Saint wonder at the amount of media attention that came in 1997 when he said, in August of that year, “When we can finally assess the number of newspaper articles and the extent of the television and radio coverage of the sesquicentennial, we will likely find that the Church has had more media exposure this year than in all the other years of our history combined.”<sup>24</sup>

Even more coverage was soon to come. The *Washington Post* featured forty-four articles from 2000 to 2002 that dealt with some combination of “the Mormons” and the Olympics. The *Post*’s Hank Steuver summarized his impressions this way: “The only religious shenanigans and Bible-thumping at the Winter Games came courtesy of angry other denominations, whose members circled Temple Square with anti-Mormon signs and pamphlets and posters.” The irony for Steuver was that in the end, “everyone looked nutty except the Mormons, who looked golden.”<sup>25</sup>

### **THE MORMON MOMENT: PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN SEASONS OF 2008 AND 2012**

With this apparent upswing in positive attention, it is little wonder that many Latter-day Saints were taken by surprise by the way Mitt Romney’s first run for the U.S. presidency seemed to be something of a rehash of the controversies of the 1980s. This is not to say that Latter-day Saints had found nothing controversial in recent *Post* reporting; after all, the Hank Steuver column just quoted about the 2002 Olympics was titled “Unmentionable No Longer: What Do Mormons Wear? A Polite Smile, If Asked about ‘the Garment.’” His article was a front-page feature in the “Style” section of the newspaper, and it included photographs of the Latter-day Saints’ temple garments taken from Church ordering catalogues. Steuver used his interest in the undergarment worn by temple-initiated Latter-day Saint adults as the springboard for a larger discussion about Latter-day Saint beliefs and practices, including the Saints’ Olympic hospitality during the Salt Lake Games. Steuver’s piece drew a swift and articulate letter to the editor written by two prominent DC-area Latter-day Saints. J. Willard Marriott Jr. and Ralph Hardy Jr. pointedly asked, “Would the *Post* be so bold to publish an equally invasive and derisive piece on the religious clothing worn by the faithful of any other religion or faith group . . . ? We think not. . . . Why, therefore, is there a double standard in the case of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?” It was an important question—and a prescient one.<sup>26</sup>

It is hard to know how readers took the overall tone of a piece like Steuver’s, which was at turns complimentary and at other turns quizzical.

What was easier to ascertain, a few years later, was the level of public discomfort with the idea of a U.S. presidential candidate who was a Latter-day Saint. A December 2006 *Washington Post*–ABC News poll showed that 35 percent of respondents “said they would be less likely” to “vote for a candidate who is Mormon.”<sup>27</sup> The evidence of public consternation over Mitt Romney’s faith was everywhere during that 2008 campaign season.

Thankfully, for those interested in Latter-day Saint media trends and coverage, Mitt Romney ran for president again, a boon for comparative purposes. (A whopping six hundred articles in the *Washington Post*, since 2000, have included the words “Romney” and “Mormon” in the same article.) So much could be said here about the differences between the 2008 election cycle coverage and the 2012 election cycle coverage, but one *Washington Post* story in particular—a February 2012 article that made instant waves—can stand in as a multilayered case study. In the article, journalist Jason Horowitz quoted a Latter-day Saint interviewee who promulgated some outdated and paternalistic explanations for the Church’s pre-1978 priesthood and temple restrictions on Black members of the Church. So prominent *and* out-of-step were the comments that the Church took the unusually strong step of disavowing both the comments and the commentator, by name, and condemning (using that very word) racism, past and present. But for a time, it appeared that this controversy would overshadow all else, as the first Latter-day Saint national party candidate for president was about to square off against the nation’s first Black president.<sup>28</sup>

But that is what made 2012 so interesting. In the weeks that followed, *Sports Illustrated* and ABC News had extensive features (and a *Sports Illustrated* cover) of the nation’s best high school basketball player, Jabari Parker, a Black Latter-day Saint from Chicago.<sup>29</sup> All of this suggested in the press that common assumptions about Latter-day Saints needed reexamination. Latter-day Saints could not be so easily painted as the monolith that they had long been assumed to be; displaying the diversity of the church’s membership was one of the key themes of the church’s “I’m a Mormon” campaign that ran in those very years. And for this reason, an Associated Press headline that appeared the day after the election trumpeted, “And the Winner Is . . . the Mormon Church.”<sup>30</sup>

On election day 2012, before the results were in, the *Washington Post* ran “Relishing the Mormon Moment.” This 1,400-word feature quoted Senator Orrin Hatch calling “the monolithic view of Mormons . . . ‘really unfair.’” Relatedly, church public affairs director Michael Otterson said that “while the church had studiously maintained its political neutrality,” still the “election had been an important opportunity for the church to ‘really depict who we are.’”<sup>31</sup> Two days after the election, this telling headline in the *Post* showed how much the world had turned in just four years: “Mormonism Not an Issue with White Evangelical Voters.”<sup>32</sup>

## AFTER THE “MORMON MOMENT”

With all of this in mind, what can be said of the post-“Mormon Moment” coverage in the *Washington Post*? What stands out?

In a word, complexity—and for many, *unexpected* complexity.

A survey of “Mormon”-related articles in the *Post* over the past half-dozen years, from 2013 to early 2020, suggests that no single issue or event has dominated recent coverage in the way that some past events have—with the exception, perhaps, of reviews and notices for various runs of the *Book of Mormon* musical, of which there have been more than three hundred in the newspaper since 2011 (including a March 2013 article with the headline “Book of Mormon Ticket Sales Crash Kennedy Center Site Again”).<sup>33</sup> But there are some themes that do show up with regularity. And what is striking is how that regularity in the *Washington Post*’s coverage can work to signal to readers that the contemporary Latter-day Saint community cannot be painted (or dismissed) with the broad brushstrokes of standard stereotypes or tropes.

Take two examples of this type of complexity that have appeared with consistency since 2013: first, the Church’s position on LGBTQ issues and its relationship with its LGBTQ members; and second, Latter-day Saints’ unexpected coolness toward a Republican president.

It is never easy to assess with confidence the impact of an individual story or even a series of stories, or to know how a broad and diverse readership might perceive the nuances of those stories. Still, what can be asked

is, What do readers encounter when they come to a story? What elements are highlighted? What is prominent?

In that vein, and in terms of Latter-day Saint and LGBTQ-related stories, the *Post*'s reporters have depicted a church trying to navigate a path less traveled. In the first half of 2013, two dozen stories in the *Washington Post* gave attention to deliberations by Boy Scouts of America administrators over the question of admitting gay young men as Scouts—and the surprise for many was that Latter-day Saint Church officials signaled their support for this change in BSA admission policy. Two front-page stories in May and June 2013 noted Latter-day Saint support for the change.<sup>34</sup> In May, the *Post* hosted a blog entry from Michael Otterson, the Church's managing director of Public Affairs: "Why Mormons Back the New Scouting Policy."<sup>35</sup> The year had started with a January article in the *Washington Post* from a Utah reporter, Peggy Fletcher Stack, with the headline "Tolerance on the March in Utah." The article pointed to church efforts, including the newly launched website [mormonsandgays.org](http://mormonsandgays.org), to "[acknowledge] that homosexuality is neither a choice nor a sin . . . to soften the rhetoric about homosexuality and to allow gay Mormons to tell their stories."<sup>36</sup>

In March 2015, the *Post* online had trumpeted this headline about compromise legislation that passed the Utah legislature: "Utah, Yes Utah, Passes Landmark LGBT Rights Bill." The story opened with this sentence: "Utah lawmakers and Mormon Church leaders celebrated a landmark moment Wednesday night, when a bill banning discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people passed the state's Republican-controlled legislature." In thinking of the bill's impact, the story continued, "the move has been seen by some as a model in compromise as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints endorsed the legislation last week. The partnership helped accelerate the bill's passage through Utah's legislature. It was proposed only last week. The church, while standing by its views, has been a voice of tolerance on issues of gender equality in a manner that has surprised some of its traditional critics."<sup>37</sup>

This acknowledgment of surprise drew attention to what many saw as unexpected: a church, widely recognized for its conservative stand on marriage, seeking to find ways to advocate for LGBTQ rights while preserving protection for religious freedom. But the road less traveled can

also be a bumpy one. While the paper included voices of praise for this kind of leadership on compromise and bridge building, the tone was different in the coverage of the announcement of a new church policy in November 2015 that affected the Church status of same-sex married couples and their children. *Post* reporters noted that while the Church had been sending signals of tolerance and cooperation with the LGBTQ community, the new policy was interpreted by observers as a “line in the sand,” and disquieted some members who questioned whether they would stay in the Church.<sup>38</sup> The policy’s rescission in April 2019 also drew the *Post*’s attention. An article from that month demonstrated well the impressive nuance that *Post* writers have given this issue. The article quoted a woman who had left the Church in 2016, “cranky and annoyed” that her planned marriage to a woman would be seen as “a ‘serious transgression’ by the church.” “You’re constantly made to think there’s something broken about you,” she said. But the article also noted that “before the policy was announced in 2015, Mormon leaders were becoming known for trying to find a balance between advocating for their religious freedom and allowing for LGBT rights by working out a political compromise with LGBT leaders in Utah earlier that year.” The same article quoted this line from Church leaders’ April 2019 statement: “We want to reduce the hate and contention so common today.”<sup>39</sup>

The church’s relationship with national political parties became another recurring theme in post-“Mormon Moment” America. Partisan politics are admittedly charged in any context, but perhaps never more so than in the years since the 2016 presidential election. On the pages of the *Post*, Latter-day Saints—including some of their most prominent political figures—came to represent (and surprisingly so) opposition voices in the Republican Party against policies and practices, and especially a president, that seemed to run counter to Latter-day Saint ideals—and they were lauded for their courage in doing so.

For example, in the lead-up to the 2016 election, a number of articles noted that Utah’s Latter-day Saint population was not lining up behind the Republican candidate for president, Donald Trump, as that population had for the previous three decades—and, more importantly, as they had come to be *expected* to do. The headline of a late October 2016 article



*United States Senators Jeff Flake (Arizona) and Mitt Romney (Utah), both Latter-day Saints, came to represent for a number of Washington Post reporters those lawmakers within the Republican Party who opposed President Donald Trump's approach to several key issues, including immigration policy.*

summed up this surprise: “Unlikeliest of Battlegrounds: Utah, where Antipathy to Donald Trump Is High.” This was issue-based, too. In March 2016, a headline noted, “Trump’s Immigration Stance Expected to Help in Arizona, but Hurt in Utah,” and the article cited Church reactions against a proposed Muslim immigration ban.<sup>40</sup> Nearly two dozen articles in the fall of 2016 noted that a third-party candidate, Evan McMullin (a Latter-day Saint), was polling in significant numbers in Utah because of dissatisfaction with the candidates from the two major parties. In 2017, Senator Jeff Flake was the subject of an editorial under the headline, “The Bravest Political Act of This Era,” and the commentator celebrated the Latter-day Saint and Republican politician from Arizona for a willingness to sacrifice his political career, if that was the cost, to openly criticize President Trump’s policies.<sup>41</sup> Then, in the midst of growing rumbles of impeachment in the fall of 2019, a front-page, 2,600-word story in the *Washington Post* called Utah senator Mitt Romney “one of the most outspoken critics in the Senate of Trump’s telephone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and the president’s decision to withdraw troops from Syria. The senator was praised



by Democrats for showing spine, and, on cue, he was attacked by Trump on Twitter.”<sup>42</sup> It had become standard fare in the paper to note Latter-day Saints’ “skepticism of Trump,” or to describe Utah as a place “where Trump is less popular (largely due to strong opposition among Mormons).”<sup>43</sup> That trend continued when Mitt Romney made history in February 2020 as the first U.S. senator to vote against a president from his or her own party in an impeachment trial, and in June 2020, when Mitt Romney joined protesters marching for racial justice after the death of George Floyd.<sup>44</sup>

Regardless of one’s political leanings, the contention here is that Latter-day Saints who are interested in accurate representations of their community should see this kind of reporting as a good thing. If the accepted wisdom is that American Latter-day Saints are in lockstep with the Republican Party (and recent polling suggests that the strong majority of American Latter-day Saints still align themselves with the GOP), the *Post*’s reporting offered additional impressions: that Latter-day Saints are not unquestioningly loyal to one party, that they come in all political varieties, that the Church’s statements about nonpartisanship really are sincere; and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can comfortably accommodate members who approach political issues differently.<sup>45</sup> It is likely that another reason behind this repeated attention to Latter-day Saint political views is the contrast with evangelical Protestants. That two conservative religious groups seemed to be trending in opposite directions in their support of President Trump only reinforced the sense of unexpected complexity in the story of Latter-day Saints in twenty-first century America.<sup>46</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Let’s return to our opening hypothetical. What impressions would our *Washington Post* reader who had no previous knowledge of “the Mormons” come away with? He would learn that the Tabernacle Choir is a go-to literary device: so many creative comparisons have centered on the Tabernacle Choir, as if it is a cultural shorthand that needs no explanation. A classic usage came in a February 1978 article that stated that an old-school basketball coach at the University of Maryland and his freelancing junior

college transfer players were about as “compatible as [the rock band] Kiss and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.”<sup>47</sup> On the pages of the *Post*, the Tabernacle Choir is America’s choir, making repeated appearances at presidential inaugurations. Our reader would learn that the grounds of the Washington D.C. Temple garner nearly annual notice as a must-see location for Christmas lights. There have also been instances when the *Post* gives unexpected notice to internal Church matters such as President Spencer W. Kimball’s hospitalizations, or Helvecio Martins’s call as the first Latter-day Saint of black African descent to be named a member of a stake presidency (in Brazil in January 1979).<sup>48</sup> Our hypothetical hospital reader would have read that former Washington Nationals baseball star Bryce Harper eschewed alcohol because of his faith,<sup>49</sup> and that the Marriotts bucked national trends by continuing to place copies of the Bible *and* the Book of Mormon in three hundred thousand newly acquired hotel rooms as they brought the Starwood Hotels into their company.<sup>50</sup> This reader would learn something of a Latter-day Saint lifestyle, something of growing Latter-day Saint diversity.

Some religionists will understandably find the whole premise of an essay like this problematic, since the worry might be that preoccupation with public perception can lead to pandering. After all, Christians readily remember that Jesus told his followers that they would be hated by the world. Leading Latter-day Saint thinker Terry L. Givens told filmmaker Helen Whitney, “Brigham Young once said that he feared the day [when] Mormons would no longer be the object of the pointing finger of scorn.” But Givens recognized that this is “one of those paradoxes,” especially for a church that has a message it wants to share: “You want to be mainstream enough that people will give your message a fair hearing.”<sup>51</sup>

In 2015, Latter-day Saint political scientist and University of Notre Dame professor David Campbell noted from his research on religion in America that Americans have the warmest feelings for Jews and Catholics. Professor Campbell’s takeaway was that these are the religious groups that are best at building bridges.<sup>52</sup> What can the *Washington Post* offer in a review of Latter-day Saints on this score? While repeating one more time that snapshots only capture pieces of a much more textured whole, it still seems telling that in a November 1978 article, a local Latter-day Saint said, “It is unusual for us to go in on these [interfaith] things,” when DC-area

Church leaders led out on an interfaith statement in support of “family week.” The reason for the exception, the Church spokesperson explained, was that “we felt so strongly the importance of anything to strengthen the family ties that we decided to do it.”<sup>53</sup> Four decades later, it would seem that the exception has become the rule. A March 2019 headline reporting on the meeting between Church President Russell M. Nelson and Pope Francis reads, “After Decades of Behind-the-scenes Diplomacy, Leaders of Catholic, Mormon Churches Meet in Rome.” This line from the article stands out: “The two groups work together on relief efforts in 43 countries.”<sup>54</sup>

If you thought you knew the Latter-day Saints, the *Washington Post* seems to say, keep reading.

## NOTES

1. Special thanks to Annie Mangus and Liel Maala for their research assistance and insights on this project. For a succinct history of the *Washington Post* and its owners, see Dan Kennedy, *The Return of the Moguls: How Jeff Bezos and John Henry Are Remaking Newspapers for the Twenty-First Century* (Lebanon, New Hampshire: 2018), 19. See also chapter 7 of Aurora Wallace, *Newspapers and the Making of Modern America: A History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005). New ownership at the *Post* in the 1930s started the paper on its current trajectory. The paper was purchased by Eugene Meyer in 1933, whose investment in the paper paid off in editorial weight. Articles in the *Post* had significant bearing on contests over increasing the size of the Supreme Court—and importantly, that editorial charge against President Roosevelt’s plan to expand the court was led by a Latter-day Saint, Merlo Pusey. He was a fixture on the pages of the *Post* for forty-three years, and a Pulitzer Prize winner for his biography of Supreme Court Justice Charles Evans Hughes. See Merlo J. Pusey, “My Fifty Years in Journalism,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 10, no. 3 (Spring 1977): 70–81.
2. Kennedy, *Return of the Moguls*, 14.
3. The argument that “newspapers matter” is a driving thesis in Kennedy, *Return of the Moguls*. These statistics come from pages 7–8, 16. Kennedy also notes that “media scholar Alex Jones . . . [estimates] at least 85 percent of original, professionally reported accountability journalism is produced by newspapers”—and then often repeated or disseminated by television and radio and other online outlets. *Return of the Moguls*, 4.

4. See, for example, Jen Wieczner, "How Jeff Bezos Reacts to 'Negative' Amazon Articles in Washington Post," *Fortune*, 27 October 2017, <https://fortune.com/2017/10/27/amazon-jeff-bezos-washington-post/>, for observations about Bezos's involvement at the *Washington Post*, as well as the fact that the *Post* had become profitable in 2016, "after 'many years' of losing money, thanks in large part to new online-only subscribers."
5. For statistics about online hits in 2016 and 2017, see Kennedy, *Return of the Moguls*, 16.
6. This number comes from a keyword search of "Mormon" in the LexisNexis database of the *Washington Post*—1977 to 2019.
7. "Mysterious Citadel on the Beltway," *Washington Post*, 1981, A1.
8. See G. Wesley Johnson and Marian Ashby Johnson, "On the Trail of the Twentieth-Century Mormon Outmigration," *BYU Studies* 46, no. 1 (2007): 41–83.
9. Marjorie Hyer, "Archbishop Urges Catholic Families to Hold Family Nights on Mondays," *Washington Post*, 27 June 1981, C10.
10. Elsa L. Walsh, "American Muslims: Area's Muslims Find Discrimination, Lack of Understanding by Americans: Searching for a Place in the Melting Pot," *Washington Post*, 20 November 1980, "Virginia Weekly" section, Va. 1, Va. 5.
11. Richard Harwood, "Change is Slow for Saudi Women: Arabia's Tradition-Bound Women; But Prosperity and Modernism Are about to Pierce the Veils Dividing the Sexes," *Washington Post*, 12 February 1978, C1. The previous sentence described Wahhabism as "flaming, puritanical evangelism."
12. "42 Seahooks Stuck in Seaman," *Washington Post*, 23 October 1977, B3.
13. Gordon B. Hinckley said this to Mike Wallace during a *60 Minutes* piece that aired on 7 April 1996.
14. Bruce L. Olsen, former managing director of the Church's Public Affairs Department, interview with Jonice Hubbard, 8 September 2006, transcript included in "Pioneers in Twentieth Century Mormon Media: Oral Histories of Latter-day Saint Electronic and Public Relations Professionals" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 2007), 121.
15. See, for example, Jan Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years Among the Mormons* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 100: "I am convinced that it was the dramatic discrepancy between clean-cut Mormons and scruffy hippies that completed the transformation of the Mormon image from the quasi-foreign, somewhat alien likeness that it had in the nineteenth century to the more than 100 percent super-American portrait of the late sixties and early seventies."

16. This is the principal argument of chapters 4, 5, and 6 of J. B. Haws, *The Mormon Image in the American Mind: Fifty Years of Public Perception* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
17. "Mormon Anti-ERA Money," *Washington Post*, 22 April 1980, A9. For important accounts on both sides of the ERA debate, see Martha Sonntag Bradley, *Pedestals and Podiums: Utah Women, Religious Authority and Equal Rights* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005); D. Michael Quinn, "A National Force, 1970s–1990s," chapter 10 of *Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997); "Not All Alike" and "Bullying the Saints," chapters 6 and 7 of Colleen McDannell, *Sister Saints: Mormon Women since the End of Polygamy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); William P. Connors, "Missionaries to the Mormons: NOW's ERA Missionary Project," *Journal of Mormon History* 45, no. 4 (October 2019): 105–32; and "The Politics of Family Values: 1972–1981," chapter 4 of Haws, *The Mormon Image in the American Mind*.
18. Ronald D. White, "Pastors Act to 'Save' Flocks from Mormons," *Washington Post*, 5 September 1981, B1.
19. T. R. Reid, "Utah's Mormon Community Transfixed by Bombing Incidents; Focus on Documents Heightens Sensitivity about Church Origins," *Washington Post*, 20 October 1985, A12; see also T. R. Reid, "Police Peruse Documents in 2 Murders: Fatal Bombings Stun Salt Lake City," *Washington Post*, 18 October 1985, A3.
20. See Question qn19k, The Gallup Poll #978, 14 June 1977, accessed at Gallup Brain database. The 1977 poll used a numerical scale to gauge opinion, from +5 (for a very favorable opinion) to -5 (for a very unfavorable opinion); 9.88 percent answered "+5," and 7.92 percent "+4," and 36 percent of respondents gave Mormons a "+1, +2, or +3" rating, meaning that 54 percent of those surveyed ranked Mormons on the positive side of the scale. Compare Barna Research Group, "Americans' Impressions of Various Church Denominations," 18 September 1991, copy in author's possession, 1: "How favorably do you consider the Mormon denomination? Very favorably—6 percent"; only 21 percent felt "somewhat favorable" about Latter-day Saints, meaning that 27 percent chose a "very" or "somewhat" favorable response in 1991.
21. For more exploration of this "individual-institutional" split in the 1980s and 1990s, see chapters 6 and 7 of *The Mormon Image in the American Mind*.
22. Bill Broadway, "10 Million Strong, Mormons Move Toward Mainstream," *Washington Post*, 3 May 1997, B06. The occasion of the report was a visit by Gordon B. Hinckley to the University of Maryland's basketball arena.
23. Laurie Goodstein, "Latter-day Trek Honors Pilgrims: Wagon Train Retracing Mormon Exodus of 1846–47," *Washington Post*, 22 June 1997, A1.

24. M. Russell Ballard, "Sharing the Gospel Message through the Media," in *Out of Obscurity: Public Affairs and the Worldwide Church: The 8th Annual Conference of the International Society, 17–18 August 1997* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1998), 5.
25. Hank Stuever, "Unmentionable No Longer: What Do Mormons Wear? A Polite Smile, If Asked about 'the Garment,'" *Washington Post*, 26 February 2002, C1.
26. J. Willard Marriott Jr. and Ralph W. Hardy Jr., "Intolerant and Insensitive," *Washington Post*, 6 March 2002, A18.
27. Dan Balz and Jon Cohen, "Clinton and Giuliani Have the Early Edge for '08, Poll Shows," *Washington Post*, 14 December 2006, A03.
28. See Jason Horowitz, "A Genesis: Equality in Mormonism," *Washington Post*, 29 February 2012, C03. For the Church's response, see "Church Statement Regarding Washington Post Article on Race and the Church," newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org of Latter-day Saints, 29 February 2012, <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/racial-remarks-in-washington-post-article>.
29. Jeff Benedict, "Jabari Parker Is . . .," *Sports Illustrated*, 21 May 2012, accessed at <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1198498/index.htm>; the cover read, "The best high school basketball player since LeBron James is Jabari Parker, but there's something more important to him than NBA stardom: his faith." Jabari Parker's conversation with Katie Couric was aired on ABC's *Good Morning America*, 14 June 2012.
30. Rachel Zoll, "And the Winner Is . . . the Mormon Church," Associated Press, 15 November 2012.
31. Jason Horowitz, "Relishing the 'Mormon Moment,'" *Washington Post*, 6 November 2012, C01.
32. Michelle Boorstein and Scott Clement, "Mormonism Not an Issue with White Evangelical Voters," *Washington Post*, 8 November 2012, A23.
33. The count represents search results based on a keyword search using ProQuest Global Newsstream database. The counts listed here and throughout should be taken as broad estimates, especially in the years since the early 2000s, since the ProQuest database aggregates both print and online articles, such that there is some repetition involved if an online article appeared with a different headline from the print version.
34. See Marc Fisher and Michelle Boorstein, "Long Road to Scouts' Change in Gay Policy," *Washington Post*, 2 June 2013, A1; see also Michelle Boorstein, "Scouts Say Yes to Gay Youths, No to Adults," *Washington Post*, 24 May 2013, A1.
35. Michael Otterson, "Why Mormons Back the New Scouting Policy," blog post in "On Faith," *Washington Post*, 31 May 2013.

36. Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Tolerance on the March in Utah," *Washington Post*, 5 January 2013, B2.
37. Lindsey Bever, "Utah—Yes, Utah—Passes Landmark LGBT Rights Bill," *Washington Post*, posted online on 12 March 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/03/12/utah-legislature-passes-landmark-lgbt-anti-discrimination-bill-backed-by-mormon-church/>. See also this page-one feature in print: Niraj Chokshi, "Gay Rights, Religious Rights and a Compromise in Utah," *Washington Post*, 13 April 2015, A1; see also Michelle Boortsein, "LGBT, Mormon Groups Unveil Anti-Bias Measure," *Washington Post*, 7 March 2015, B2.
38. Sarah Pulliam Bailey, "Mormons Issue Policy on Gay Households," *Washington Post*, 7 November 2015, A2. See also Michelle Boorstein, "Mormon Church: Same-sex Baptism Ban Protects 'Harmony,'" *Washington Post*, 14 November 2015, B2.
39. Sarah Pulliam Bailey, "Mormons Reverse Policy on Children of LGBT Parents," *Washington Post*, 5 April 2019, A3. In a *Washington Post* article in 2018, Orrin Hatch stood in as a Latter-day Saint representative of a change in approach and tone in relation to LGBTQ issues and individuals. The newspaper noted that the retiring senator, one characterized as a "socially conservative 84-year-old Mormon, . . . long one of the most outspoken critics of gay people in Congress . . . took to the Senate floor" during Pride Month "to send 'a message of love' to 'my LGBT brothers and sisters. . . . They deserve to know that they belong and that our society is stronger because of them.'" James Hohmann, "Hatch Sends 'Message of Love' in Pride Month Speech," *Washington Post*, 15 June 2018, A16. The article also highlighted Hatch's approach as contrasting with that of a number of fellow conservatives.
40. For recent data and analysis about how American Latter-day Saints diverge from other Christian conservatives in voting patterns and attitudes about immigration reform (and other contemporary issues), see "A Politically Peculiar People," chapter 5 of David E. Campbell, John C. Green, and J. Quin Monson's detailed study, *Seeking the Promised Land: Mormons and American Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
41. Michael Gerson, "The Bravest Political Act of this Era," *Washington Post*, 4 August 2017, A15. The author was specifically referring to the publication of Flake's book, *Conscience of a Conservative*. Gerson wrote, "Flake is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and one explanation for the skepticism many of his fellow Mormons share about Trump is surely their focus on personal character and rectitude. But another is their own history as victims of persecution." Gerson quoted Flake as saying, "When we say 'No Muslims' or 'No Mexicans,' we may as well say 'No Mormons.' Because it is no different."



42. Michael Kranish, “Trump-Romney Bond Turns Cold in a Blizzard of Bitter Words,” *Washington Post*, 27 October 2019, A1. The online version of the article carried this headline: “They bonded over football years ago. Now President Trump sees Mitt Romney as his harshest GOP foe”; [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/they-bonded-over-football-years-ago-now-president-trump-sees-mitt-romney-as-his-harshest-gop-foe/2019/10/26/d1083370-f682-11e9-829d-87b12c2f85dd\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/they-bonded-over-football-years-ago-now-president-trump-sees-mitt-romney-as-his-harshest-gop-foe/2019/10/26/d1083370-f682-11e9-829d-87b12c2f85dd_story.html).
43. John Hudson and John Wagner, “Trump Realigns National Security Staff,” *Washington Post*, 18 September 2019, A6. The article dealt with the appointment of Robert C. O’Brien as the president’s “new national security adviser,” which made O’Brien “the highest-ranking Mormon in the U.S. government, an important development for a religious community that has shown some skepticism of Trump and will be a closely watched voting demographic in states such as Arizona.” The line about “strong opposition” came in Jennifer Rubin, “As Orrin Hatch Retires, Here Are Six Things to Watch,” *Washington Post*, 3 January 2018, A15.
44. See, for example, “History Will Remember This,” a piece written by the editorial board of the *Washington Post*, 6 February 2020, A20 (online on 5 February 2020 as “History Will Remember Mitt Romney,” [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/history-will-remember-mitt-romney/2020/02/05/b5945e22-4856-11ea-8124-0ca81effcdfb\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/history-will-remember-mitt-romney/2020/02/05/b5945e22-4856-11ea-8124-0ca81effcdfb_story.html); Michael Gerson, “Thank You, Mitt Romney,” *Washington Post*, 6 February 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/mitt-romney-is-not-alone/2020/02/06/7668c2ea-4916-11ea-9164-d3154ad8a5cd\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/mitt-romney-is-not-alone/2020/02/06/7668c2ea-4916-11ea-9164-d3154ad8a5cd_story.html); Michelle Boorstein and Hannah Natanson, “Mitt Romney, Marching with Evangelicals, Becomes First GOP Senator to Join George Floyd Protests in D.C.,” *Washington Post*, 8 June 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2020/06/07/romney-protest-black-lives-matter/>; and Aaron Blake, “Why Mitt Romney Stands Apart among Republicans in Criticizing Trump,” *Washington Post*, 8 June 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/history-will-remember-mitt-romney/2020/02/05/b5945e22-4856-11ea-8124-0ca81effcdfb\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/history-will-remember-mitt-romney/2020/02/05/b5945e22-4856-11ea-8124-0ca81effcdfb_story.html).
45. See Michael Lipka, “U.S. Religious Groups and Their Political Leanings,” Pew Research Fact Tank, 23 February 2016, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/02/23/u-s-religious-groups-and-their-political-leanings/>: “Mormons are the most heavily Republican-leaning religious group in the U.S., while a pair of major historically black Protestant denominations—the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and the National Baptist Convention—are two of the most reliably Democratic groups, according to data from Pew Research Center’s 2014 Religious Landscape Study.” For Latter-day Saint voting patterns in 2018, see Hannah Fingerhut and Brady McCombs, “Most Mormons Voted Republican in the Midterms—But Their

Trump Approval Rating Continues to Decline, Study Finds,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 29 November 2018, <https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2018/11/29/most-Mormons-voted/>: “About two-thirds of Mormon voters nationwide favored Republicans in the midterm elections, but President Donald Trump’s approval rating among members of the faith lagged behind, according to a nationwide survey of midterm voters.” See also “Mormon Political Views: Cohesive, Conservative, and Republican,” chapter 4 in Campbell, Green, and Monson, *Seeking the Promised Land: Mormons and American Politics*.

46. For recent examples, see Steven Waldman, “What Happened to U.S. Evangelical Leaders? In Early America, They Were Our Freedom Fighters,” *Washington Post*, 8 May 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2019/05/08/what-happened-us-evangelicals-early-america-they-were-our-freedom-fighters/>: “Most important, they [Franklin Graham and Jerry Falwell] have been fervent supporters of Trump, even after he took the historic step of proposing a ban on Muslim immigrants. While Jewish and Mormon groups opposed the plan, 61 percent of white evangelicals supported it.” See also Sarah Pulliam Bailey, “Did the Election Damage Christianity in the U.S.?” *Washington Post*, 12 November 2016, B2; see also Fingerhut and McCombs, “Most Mormons Voted Republican in the Midterms—But Their Trump Approval Rating Continues to Decline, Study Finds”: “The new data reaffirms Trump’s struggle to gain widespread acceptance among Mormons despite the faith’s deep-rooted conservative leanings. Voters of other religious faiths such as evangelical Christians and Catholics are more consistent in their ratings of the president and vote choice. Across most other religious affiliations, about the same share voted for Republican candidates as said they approve of the president. That’s not the case with Mormons: 67 percent voted for Republicans, but 56 percent said they approve of the way Trump is handling his job as president. That’s according to an analysis of 1,528 Mormon voters based on data from VoteCast, a survey of more than 115,000 voters nationwide conducted for The Associated Press by NORC at the University of Chicago. The data offers an unusual level of detail about the voting decisions of a sometimes misunderstood religion. Among Mormon voters in Utah, 76 percent preferred Republican congressional candidates, but only 56 percent said they approved of Trump. By comparison, 8 in 10 white evangelical Christians nationwide voted for Republican candidates, and nearly as many (79 percent) said they approve of Trump. Among Catholics, nearly half voted for Republican candidates and said they approve of Trump (49 percent each).”
47. Ken Denlinger, “Poor Chemistry,” *Washington Post*, 3 February 1978, B1.
48. These notices appeared in the *Washington Post* in several articles in 1981.
49. See, for example, two recent examples: Scott Allen, “Bye, Bryce: Harper Leaves Memes and Memories,” *Washington Post*, 1 March 2019, D6; Scott

- Allen, “Harper Goes Dark as Intrigue Intensifies,” *Washington Post*, 8 November 2018, D2. Both articles call Harper a “devout Mormon.” The first article highlighted his abstaining from alcohol; the second his response to Church president Russell M. Nelson’s call for a 10-day “social media fast.”
50. See Rachel Siegel, “Going against the Trend, Marriott Will Add Bibles to 300,000 Hotel Rooms,” *Washington Post*, 28 August 2018, A13.
  51. TerryL Givens in part 2 of the documentary *The Mormons*, ; transcript accessible at <http://www.pbs.org/Mormons/interviews/givens.html>.
  52. David Masci, “Q&A [with David Campbell]: A Look at What’s Driving the Changes Seen in Our Religious Landscape Study,” Fact Tank, Pew Research Center, 27 May 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/27/qa-a-look-at-whats-driving-the-changes-seen-in-our-religious-landscape-study/>. See also David E. Campbell and Robert D. Putnam, “Islam and American Tolerance: What the Experience of Jews and Catholics Suggests about the Future of Muslims,” *Wall Street Journal*, 12 August 2011, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424053111903918104576500813668126384>.
  53. “Church Leaders Boost National Family Week,” *Washington Post*, 25 November 1978, A22: “Initiative for the statement came from [Washington Stake president Ralph] Mecham, who cleared the proposal with international Mormon headquarters in Salt Lake City.”
  54. Michelle Boorstein, “After Decades of Behind-the-scenes Diplomacy, Leaders of Catholic, Mormon Churches Meet in Rome,” *Washington Post*, 9 March 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2019/03/09/after-decades-behind-the-scenes-diplomacy-leaders-catholic-mormon-churches-meet-rome/>.