The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in National Periodicals, 1982-1990

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THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS IN
NATIONAL PERIODICALS 1982-1990

By
Matthew E. Morrison

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and has been found satisfactory.

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As chair of the candidate’s graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Matthew E. Morrison in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS IN NATIONAL PERIODICALS 1982-1990

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Religious Education
Master of Arts

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has continued to receive exposure in national periodicals. This thesis will explore that image from 1982 to 1990. During those years, the church continued to grow in membership and expand its existing programs.

National periodicals can assist in assessing the public image of the Church because they help "mould public attitudes by presenting facts and views on issues in exactly the same way at the same time throughout the entire country." In this manner, they help to form the public opinion about the Church. They also reflect existing opinions because magazine publishers cater to what the public is interested in. This study will enhance the reader's understanding of this image by discussing the topics that received the greatest emphasis during that time period.

This study is preceded by two theses, one by Adam H. Nielson covering the Church's image from 1970-1981, and the other by Dale P. Pelo, which studied the image
of the Church from 1961-1970. Richard O. Cowan presented a doctoral dissertation which covered 1850-1961. This thesis is a continuation of those studies, and implements the same research procedures and methods.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My wife, Carda, has inspired me and encouraged me throughout this project. As an editor her suggestions were invaluable. She sacrificed personal time with me and helped me do better than I could have done alone. She also helped with the tables and graphs in Chapter 7. My wonderful children, Jarom, Amanda, and Caleb were also willing to give up a lot of time with dad so that I could complete this thesis.

Dr. Richard Cowan, my committee chairperson, was so supportive. His comments and suggestions were appropriate and helpful. He was always quick to reply and available to assist with everything. His optimistic attitude gave me encouragement on the days I wanted to quit.

I appreciate the additional support and help of Drs. Mary Jane Woodger and Robert Freeman. They served as members of my thesis committee and gave numerous suggestions that were beneficial. Dr. D. Kelly Ogden served as the graduate coordinator and was constantly offering suggestions and encouragement.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This thesis reveals how The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was portrayed in popular news magazines between 1982 and 1990. Popular magazine articles were used as the source because they may reflect public opinion or assist in shaping public perceptions about individuals, events, or organizations. Articles are influential because they "have moulded public attitudes by presenting facts and views on issues in exactly the same way at the same time throughout the entire country."\(^1\) A review of news articles that include information about the Church written during those years will make it possible to note the positive or negative portrayal of the Church and its membership.\(^2\)

Since the official organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1830, public opinion and representation about the Church has been both positive and negative. Generally speaking, previous studies have revealed that a majority of the magazine articles were negative in nature.

Three significant studies have been done previous to this one. Richard O. Cowan presented a doctoral dissertation at Stanford University as an overview of the Church in national periodicals between 1850 and 1961. Cowan’s study was followed by a Master’s thesis by Dale P. Pelo, a student at Brigham Young University, whose research covered 1961-1970. Most recently, Adam H. Nielson, also a student at Brigham Young University, completed a Master’s thesis studying 1970-1981. This work will continue the study, with emphasis on the years 1982 to 1990.

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\(^2\) The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will hereafter be referred to as "the Church."
Methodology

National magazine articles were compiled from the *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature*. Some of the magazines included in this study are *People Weekly*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report*. Because religious magazines or Church publications could have bias toward The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, they were not used in the study.

Specific articles were selected if they contained the following words or phrases in the title: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Mormons, or Mormonism. Names of famous members of the Church were also helpful in locating articles.

In order to be consistent with previous studies, each article was read and then rated on an established scale used by Cowan, Pelo, and Nielson. The categories are:

- Obviously biased “anti-Latter-day Saint” writing
- Unfavorable
- Neutral
- Favorable description
- “Pro Latter-day Saint” biased writing

Each article was also categorized by theme. These articles will show whether a particular theme was treated more positively or negatively than others, how the Church was viewed in general, whether or not there was any shift in opinion during the decade, and how this decade compared to the treatment of certain topics in the past. It will also show which events may have contributed to the overall impression of the Church as portrayed in magazines.
This thesis will incorporate a hybrid of chronological and topical organization, with chapters grouped by topic as explored throughout the decade. A chapter will be devoted to each of the topics that received the greatest emphasis between 1981 and 1990. The chronology of events will help determine the relationship between the topics of the article and broader events of historical significance.

**Review of Previous Studies**

Richard O. Cowan, professor of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University, who is considered an authority on twentieth century Latter-day Saint history, wrote a doctoral dissertation in 1961 while attending Stanford University. "Mormonism in National Periodicals" explored how events, both historical and religious, helped improve the Church's image.

In 1961, when Cowan wrote his dissertation, the Church was not viewed as negatively as in previous decades. Many of the Church's social programs instituted during the Great Depression were the highlights in magazine articles. Cowan's study covered the years of struggle and acceptance for the Church. Cowan concluded that while it is "impossible to assume that the magazine articles accurately reflected existing popular sentiment," the study was large enough in scope to suggest that the articles did reflect public opinion.\(^3\) When the Church doctrines conflicted with "political correctness," the Church was portrayed in a negative way. A second notable conclusion by Cowan was that "no single magazine deviated significantly from the overall press

image of the Saints." Following are some examples that Cowan gave to bolster his assertions.

Utah fought a long battle for statehood, but the desire of the Latter-day Saints to be recognized as a state was hampered by the practice of polygamy. According to Cowan, "the extent of the practice of polygamy was greatly exaggerated in the public mind." The Church received greater public attention as legislation was passed that prohibited the practice of plural marriage. Almost all of the press on this subject was negative in nature.

A second and closely related issue Latter-day Saints struggled against in the national periodicals was the control Church leaders exerted in the political arena. "Magazine writers sought an explanation of why the ecclesiastical authorities were able to achieve such a great hold over the temporal affairs of Utah." As the government continued to fight against polygamy, the Church received greater pressure over what was viewed by some individuals as a religious dictatorship. One example came from a writer in Forum who charged that "the visible Mormon Church structure was not the main threat, but that there was an 'invisible hierarchy' whose existence the Mormons kept secret from all Gentiles and which exerted the real power in Utah." A number of magazine articles were negative in content about Church leadership.

Some prominent Church members became involved in national politics in the early twentieth century. This involvement caused concern for Church antagonists because of the perceived power the Church held in the state of Utah. B. H. Roberts and

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6 Cowan, "1850-1961," 44.
Reed Smoot were two men in high Church leadership positions. They were also both involved in U.S. politics. Roberts was elected to the United States Congress in 1898 and Smoot to the Senate in 1903. Church publicity increased during these years, but most of it was very negative even though the Church had discontinued the practice of plural marriage. Roberts had plural wives and was denied a seat in the House of Representatives. Smoot did not personally practice plural marriage, but, because of his calling as an Apostle, his antagonists tried to show that Smoot sanctioned the practice. Public interest remained high until Smoot was officially seated in the United States Senate. Cowan used these events as examples of how doctrines and practices accepted by the Church received negative publicity in periodicals due to the high profile nature of Church members who sought for political office.

Following the first few years in the 1900s, the Church received less scrutiny in magazines until the 1920s and 1930s in which “magazine writers generally presented Mormonism in an unfavorable light.” More positive articles came following the Great Depression during which the Church established a number of programs to provide for the temporal welfare of its members. Due to the great success of many of these programs, perceptions of magazine writers toward “Mormons” changed from “non-American” to “American because of thrift, industry and self-reliance.” In another article a writer referred to the Latter-day Saints as “God-fearing, Bible reading Christians.”

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8 Brigham Henry Roberts (1857-1933) was called to the First Quorum of the Seventy, a governing body of the Church, in 1888. He was elected to Congress in 1898, but was never seated in his elected position because he had plural wives. A Seventy has “major responsibility for administering the affairs of the Church throughout the world.” Source: Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 5 vols. [1992], 3:1303-04.
9 An Apostle is a member of the second highest ranking governing body of the Church.
establishment of the Church’s welfare program became the focus of a number of magazine articles, accounting for “four fifths of all articles concerning Mormonism from 1936 to 1938.” This was one of the first times in the Church’s history that “pro-Mormon” articles appeared. Almost all of the attacks that had focused on Church hierarchy and polygamy disappeared during this time period.

Dale P. Pelo continued the work of Richard Cowan with his thesis entitled, “Mormonism in National Periodicals 1961-1970.” Pelo emphasized that “periodicals must reflect the mood of the public or they would cease to exist.” Because people generally read magazines and articles they are interested in, their opinions are likely to coincide with those of the author. When a reader does not understand an issue prior to reading an article, he can be more fully convinced of the correctness of the bias of the writer. Because of this, Pelo concluded that, “a periodical can therefore mold the opinions of the unlearned to the greatest extent.”

The positive image the Church enjoyed during the 1940s and 1950s turned in a negative direction as the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum. The Church had a long-standing policy that prohibited members of black-African descent from holding the priesthood. Although the Church welfare programs continued to receive positive press, the Church faced allegations of racism and bigotry for withholding the full Church

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16 The priesthood, as identified in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is God’s power, given to man on earth, to perform God’s work. The priesthood authorizes man to act in the name of God. This power is only extended to worthy male members from the age of twelve and older. There are two branches of the priesthood, namely, the Aaronic (generally for young men between the ages of 12 and 18) and the Melchizedek (for adult men over age 18). Prior to the revelation received in June 1978 by President Spencer W. Kimball, male members of black African descent could not have the priesthood bestowed upon them.
blessings from some of its membership. This topic came to the forefront when George Romney, a well-known Church member, ran for Governor of Michigan. One magazine reported that, “the Mormon Church looks on the Negroes as an inferior race, cursed by God.”17 The Negro-Church issue received increased publicity when Romney emerged as a potential presidential candidate.

Unfortunately, Church leaders almost never explained the policy on why the black members were denied the priesthood. Pelo noted, “only one article was written by a member of the Mormon Church” on this subject during that time period.18 Most magazine articles written at that time pointed the finger at Church founder Joseph Smith until Time Magazine shifted the blame to Brigham Young. Although most of the coverage was negative, a few writers mentioned that the policy could change in the future if a president of the Church received a revelation directing him to do so.19

Amid the race controversy, a number of Latter-day Saints emerged in sporting events that gave the Church positive publicity. In 1966, famous golfer Billy Casper was baptized into the Church. Between 1966 and 1971, “thirteen articles were written about the golfer. More than half of the articles mention the fact that he was a member of the Church, and many go into detail on his membership in the LDS faith.”20 Casper was also very willing to discuss his new faith with writers. One magazine article referred to Casper as “an enthusiastic missionary.”21

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The topic that received the most publicity during the decade was tithing. Many magazine writers were stunned that an individual was willing to pay ten percent of his income to an organization.

Pelo concluded that “the image of Mormonism in national periodicals during the period 1961-1970 was of a slightly positive nature.” Articles written near the end of the 1960’s were mostly negative. Pelo attributed the negativism to two trends: “First, the decline in popularity of George Romney as a presidential candidate; and secondly, the problems of the Church and its doctrine concerning the Negro and the priesthood.” By 1973 Romney was out of the national spotlight, and a significant revelation in 1978 that extended the rights of the priesthood to all worthy men helped to decrease the negative publicity surrounding members of black-African descent.

Adam Nielson continued where Pelo left off, writing about the years 1970-1981. The topic that received the most magazine coverage continued to be the Church’s priesthood policy. Writers from Newsweek, Time, and Sports Illustrated devoted pages to reasons why there were “bigoted attitudes in the religion.” If the periodicals adequately reflected the public opinion about Church members, the belief was that “Latter-day Saints [were] racially prejudiced.”

Although much of the press was negative, Nielson commented that there was one possibility that “portrayed the Church in an almost positive, or at least neutral way. This point was the possibility that a revelation to the Church’s prophet could change the

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policy" as had been done previously when Wilford Woodruff published the Manifesto that officially ended the practice of plural marriage.26

Once the revelation was received and announced, "only two periodicals, *Time* and *Newsweek* reported the event immediately."27 Relatively few articles were written on the issue once it was resolved. Those that did comment on it attributed the change in policy to social pressure to avoid the reputation of racism rather than an actual revelation from God, as the Church claimed.28

A second issue that received considerable press was the Church’s financial position and the business success of many Church members. Articles written about J. Willard Marriott and Elder N. Eldon Tanner, among others, reflected positively on the Church’s financial practices and its teachings. The Church also was portrayed positively because it “did not go into debt to pay for and finance [its] operations.”29 Although much press was positive, a negative slant came from some who suggested that Church leadership got wealthy at the members’ expense, and violated some tax laws.30

During the 1970s, some articles again focused on the power that the Church leadership had over its membership. A lot of negative articles were written as Church leadership got involved in the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion issues. The Church opposed the Equal Rights Amendment, which sought for gender neutrality, because of the potential consequences it could have on society and the family. Sonia Johnson, a fifth generation “Mormon,” was excommunicated from the Church for publicly attacking the

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Church and its leaders. She was very vocal about the excommunication, engaging in public speaking opportunities, passing out leaflets, and picketing at the Seattle Washington Temple along with 20 other women. Once the ERA was defeated in 1982, magazines stopped reporting about Johnson.

Despite the negative press about the ERA, positive articles continued to be written about Church programs during this time period. The construction of the Washington D. C. temple, the increase in missionary activity, and the Church-wide focus on Family Home Evening all received positive reviews. Some negative press accompanied the positive as plural marriage was again mentioned as something “Latter-day Saints still believed in . . . but could not practice.”

Thus, during much of the 130-year period from 1851-1981, the Church’s image has been predominantly negative, although there were some periods when it became more positive due to interest shown in specific programs or prominent Church members.

This study will continue to build on the work of Cowan, Pelo and Nielson. It will cover 1982-1990, a period when the Church enjoyed tremendous growth and experienced successes and challenges. Chapters in this thesis will explore how the Church was perceived during the decade of the 1980s, and the significant events that helped shaped the public image of the Latter-day Saints.

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CHAPTER 2
FAMILY ISSUES

During the 1980s the Church received considerable publicity in national magazines because of differences between common American and Latter-day Saint families. Several family issues received a great amount of publicity. First, a number of articles written throughout the decade commented on the high birth rate in Utah, which was “double the national average” and was linked to the large Latter-day Saint families living in the state.¹ Second, some magazine writers perceived that the men and the Church doctrines oppressed women in the Church. A third area of interest in national periodicals centered on Church teachings encouraging mothers to be homemakers and the growing number of working mothers in the Church. Finally, some magazines discussed how the temple marriage in the Church differed from traditional marriage in that it centered on a belief of the continuation of marriage and family into the next life.

Large Latter-day Saint Families

Nationally, during the 1980s, families were decreasing in number of children, but in Utah, a predominantly Latter-day Saint state, families remained large. According to an article in Vital Speeches of the Day, Utah boasted the highest birthrate in the nation, and the highest percentage of children under age 10.² Many attributed the high birth rate to the fact that seventy percent of Utah’s population was Latter-day Saint. Utah became almost synonymous with large families and in Change magazine, the author commented

on the relationship. “Big families are a landmark in Utah, as obvious and nearly as peculiar to Utah as the spires of the Mormon Temple and the buoyant waters of the Great Salt Lake. The high birth rate is such a fact of life that when 22 hours and 46 minutes went by one day in 1974 without a baby being born at Salt Lake’s LDS Hospital, the non-event made local news.”

While some magazine writers seemed amused with the size of Latter-day Saint families, others expressed concern. A writer in The Humanist was outraged by what she described as “untrammeled baby-making” which led to problems with “overpopulation.” During her visit to Salt Lake City, the author had set up a booth at the Utah State Fair to promote Zero Population Growth. Individuals were invited to review some materials and take computerized tests to determine their awareness of concerns with overpopulation.

She used a number of harsh words to convey how she felt about her visit to Utah from Los Angeles. “I was shocked and upset” she observed, “appalled” in the “total chaos” of the surroundings. This caused her to “yearn to return to Los Angeles” for she “could never feel comfortable” in Utah. She lamented the “killing job” of trying to get Church members to realize the danger of large families, referring to it also as “depressing work” because Latter-day Saints “just did not understand.” Despite her efforts to warn Church members of what she perceived as future catastrophe if they continued to have large families, she lamented that Latter-day Saint couples would still walk away from her booth confident they were doing God’s work and proud of their large families.

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3 Jarvik, “Going Against the Trends,” 12.
Besides overpopulation, articles pointed out other concerns with large families. One writer in *Change* mentioned that “this persistence in procreating” would lead to future problems in funding higher education in Utah. Another writer cautioned that because of the high birth rate in Utah coupled with the state’s limited resources, its level of per capita income was near the bottom in state rankings, with only one other state in the nation at a lower income level in 1984.

According to Elaine Stansfield of *The Humanist*, these economic concerns caused the large Latter-day Saint family to look at smaller families with a “sort of envy” because the smaller family can offer their “one child, who seems very happy . . . more time, nurture, [and] money for education.” She felt that if the truth were really known, that more Latter-day Saint families would remain smaller. Others saw the large Latter-day Saint families as affecting much more than Utah economics. One magazine writer thought that the high birth rate was “straining the warp and weave of the society” to such an extent that it approached global concern because Utah’s birth rate was similar to the rate of many Third World countries. If left unchecked, *The Humanist* writer feared that the oversized families could eventually destabilize world order.

Magazine articles in *Savvy*, *The Humanist*, *Vital Speeches of the Day*, *The New York Times Magazine* and *The Saturday Evening Post* pointed out that the reason many Utah families were so large was directly related to the emphasis placed on the family by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They proposed that Church leaders “encouraged [Latter-day Saint women] to keep on having children, often in rapid

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8 Jarvik, “Going Against the Trends,” 12.
succession.”

One article sought for answers in Church history, when Church members first moved to Utah and Church leaders encouraged the formation of huge families as a way to quickly build the Church. For the next 100 years after arriving in Utah, Latter-day Saint couples averaged about eight children each. One writer referred to the influence from the Church as “emphasis,” another said that the Church taught that “each family should have as many children as the parents can adequately provide for” and one writer describes it as “parenthood compulsion” and a “religious mandate.”

Latter-day Saint doctrine was also mentioned as a factor influencing the large families of Church members. Articles in Change, The Humanist, and Savvy all cited Latter-day Saint teachings about souls that are waiting in a pre-existence to be born. One article listed what the author regarded as Latter-day Saint beliefs that led to large families. These included the idea of “getting the backlog of spirit children into the present ‘earth-testing-stage’” in preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Another tenet was the perception that children who were born into large Latter-day Saint families were much favored by God. A third reason was that “there will be greater glory in heaven for those parents who have been fertile and have not limited their families.” Finally, the writer mentioned “enormous social pressure” in the Church, and that those

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18 See Jarvik, “Going Against the Trends,” 12; Keown, “What Utah Children Believe,” 25; Prose, “Latter-day Saints,” 91. Latter-day Saints believe that before we were born on earth, we lived as spirits in a pre-mortal world.
couples who had a large family were considered spiritual, leading to greater acceptance in the church.\textsuperscript{20}

Elaine Stansfield from \textit{The Humanist} magazine and a member of Zero Population Growth feared a “Master Plan” to spread Latter-day Saint ideas regarding family size worldwide.\textsuperscript{21} In defense of her belief, she claimed, “we have \textit{already} multiplied, been fruitful, and populated the earth.”\textsuperscript{22} She recommended birth control as a solution to what she saw as the problem. She did note, erroneously, “some of them use birth control even though they’re only supposed to have sex for propagating.”\textsuperscript{23} Church policy states that the decision to use birth control or not is the decision of the husband and wife. Stansfield felt that Latter-day Saint families needed to consider birth control much earlier in marriage instead of waiting until they had three or four children to begin.

A second writer explained the Church’s position on birth control. Said he, “the most recent statements on birth control issued by Mormon authorities stress that the size of a person’s family is for the husband and wife to decide, not a matter of doctrine.”\textsuperscript{24} He noted that in recent months Church leaders had instructed their news editors not to glorify large families. Pointing to Church leadership, he noticed that many of them had small families. In light of these statements, both verbal and visual, he felt that the popular image of the Utah large family needed to be modified.\textsuperscript{25}

Although Elaine Stansfield from \textit{The Humanist} could not see benefits of large families (she wrote, “They’re really good people, if only they didn’t have this obsession

\textsuperscript{20} Keown, “What Utah Children Believe,” 25.
\textsuperscript{22} Stansfield, “Baby City, U.S.A.,” 21.
\textsuperscript{24} Clayton, “Different World of Utah,” 189.
\textsuperscript{25} Clayton, “Different World of Utah,” 189.
about having kids”), others did see a tremendous blessing to large Latter-day Saint family. Michael Waldholz from *The Saturday Evening Post* acknowledged that Brigham Young had no idea of the legacy he would leave to modern science by encouraging large families in the Church. Scientists saw the unusually large families of Church members as the breakthrough that would allow them to crack the most basic riddles of human illness with great strides to be made in seeking a cure for various forms of cancer. Waldholz also commented on the large Latter-day Saint family: “Nowhere in the world is there a collection of people as ideal for current genetics research as the Mormons.”

**Perceived Oppression of Latter-day Saint Women**

By the 1980s, traditional roles of women in America had changed drastically. More women were entering the work force and number of children in many families was decreasing. An article in the *New York Times Magazine* suggested that some Latter-day Saint women were really struggling with the differing paths taken by American society and the Church. There is a “budding restiveness,” the writer said, among some Latter-day Saint women over the role defined for them by the church. During this decade the Church came under attack by some who saw the organization as an oppressing force in the lives of its female members. They saw the oppression expressed in matters of education, priesthood, and patriarchal prominence.

*Education.* Some magazine writers commented on the oppression of women in matters of education. One in particular lauded the Church for encouraging women as

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28 Waldholz, “Mormons’ Genetic Legacy,” 52.
29 Waldholz, “Mormons’ Genetic Legacy,” 52.
well as men to attend college, but stressed the oppression of women by saying that the Church believes “in education for women up to a point.”[^31] The point alluded to was that women were supposed to immediately drop all educational pursuits once they were married and began a family, even though this had never been a Church doctrine. *Rolling Stone* magazine spoke of what it called “a stigma of failure” for a single Latter-day Saint woman, no matter how accomplished academically she was.[^32] Because of this, they said female members of the Church preferred marriage to a degree. Statistics in the year 1982 revealed that eighty percent of freshman men would ultimately graduate from Brigham Young University, but only forty percent of women would.[^33]

A writer for *Change* magazine noted that at Church-owned Brigham Young University, certain topics were not acceptable for discussion in classes. Two she mentioned both dealt with women’s issues—abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment. Although the Equal Rights Amendment advocating gender neutrality was defeated in 1982, it was still a sensitive topic. Anyone advocating the Equal Rights Amendment was “no longer allowed to speak on campus,” she said.[^34] She used the Equal Rights Amendment as an example to assert young women were not being allowed to hear or discuss topics that went contrary to the Church teachings. She then quoted an anonymous professor at Brigham Young University who said “our very brightest women don’t come here mostly, or if they do they don’t stay; they feel smothered... [because] an inquiring mind is swimming upstream here.”[^35] Although a statement or two was made

[^33]: Bart, “Prigging Out,” 93.
[^34]: Jarvik, “Going Against the Trends,” 18-19.
that reflected positively on the Church’s teachings for women, most of the articles like this one and were negative in nature.

**Priesthood.** A more heated perspective on the oppression of Latter-day Saint women came from those who saw inequality based on priesthood privileges. As previously mentioned, the Church had announced in 1978 that race would no longer be a limitation for ordaining men to the priesthood, and some magazine writers thought that women should be granted the same privilege. Latter-day Saints accepted the revelation as a declaration of the will of God given through his chosen servant. *Savvy* magazine stated: “The aspect of church doctrine many women find troublesome (and, in some cases, impossible to live with) is the disposition of the lay priesthood.”

The discrimination was perceived in that essentially every Latter-day Saint male at least age twelve was allowed to hold the priesthood. Women, regardless of age or ability, were never allowed to have the priesthood. As reported in *Savvy* as well as *U.S. News and World Report*, this oppression did not allow women to participate in the public blessings of their own children. The writer went on to quote a female member who recalled thinking of the unfairness of priesthood delegation due to the fact that “all criteria were based on gender, not on merit.”

Following the death of President Spencer W. Kimball, the Church president who received the revelation in 1978, “almost no one” expected the next prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, “to grant Mormon women full ecclesiastical equality with men priests of the

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church.” Expressing her disapproval that Kimball had not made the change to allow women the priesthood before his death, *The Humanist* writer Elaine Stansfield criticized both Kimball and the revelation process. Stansfield was shocked that female member Sonia Johnson was denied the same right because “Kimball couldn’t get a revelation regarding women--apparently he couldn’t bring himself to go quite that far.”

She then expressed what she saw as the heart of the issue, that the Church was oppressive toward female members. Because Sonia Johnson was later excommunicated from the Church, Stansfield asserted that Church leadership treats feminists very harshly. Those who refused to follow the counsel of the male Church leaders were removed immediately from membership in the Church. The Sonia Johnson case placed Church leaders in a peculiar position because, according to Stansfield, “they needed to . . . sound broad-minded and still keep women in their place.” She highlighted what she felt were outdated Church teachings and invited the Church leaders to move into the twentieth century with regard to women’s issues.

This perceived inequality was mentioned in *Savvy* magazine. The writer emphasized that married women could only enjoy the blessings of their husband’s priesthood, but needed to focus themselves on their “priestly responsibilities” —the quilt making and bread baking. The writer reflected on the impact the denial of priesthood privilege to women could have on the Church, sensing this as an issue that could permanently distance many women from the Church. In reality, the division and

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distancing never occurred, largely due to the willingness of Church members to follow Church leaders and policy.

_Patriarchal Prominence._ Another area in which magazine writers perceived oppression of women in the Church was that men and fathers seemed to have advantages over women based on Church doctrine and traditional Latter-day Saint families. They saw men as dominant figures in the family, shouldering all the responsibility for decision making, often in a very oppressive manner.

Stansfield gave an example of this oppression in _The Humanist_ magazine. During her stay in Salt Lake City, she noted the patriarchal prominence. She wrote, “it was instructive to me to watch the people as they paused politely, wondering whether or not to take our computer quiz. Actually, ‘they’ didn’t wonder. The _father_ of the family did the deciding. . . His wife (invariably pregnant) always walked several steps behind him, trailed by as many children as the number of years they had doubtless been married.”

One magazine perceived oppression in something as basic as communication with God. In _Savvy_, the author described the communication relationship between God, husband and wife. In order to be a good Latter-day Saint wife, she said, the woman had to understand that “the husband has a direct pipeline to God.” She wrote that for a woman to try to usurp that right, or contradict the husband’s will in any form was an act of heresy.

The Church responded to allegations of patriarchal dominance by pointing to the fact that the Church has an organization exclusively for women known as the Relief

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46 Prose, “Latter-day Saints,” 58. She is quoting Kathryn MacKay, a historian and researcher at the American West Center at the University of Utah who is a sixth-generation Latter-day Saint.
Society. One magazine pointed out that even though there was such an organization, it was further evidence of discrimination against women. The author reflected her viewpoint in such a manner because the Relief Society was no longer allowed to own property, control its own funds or elect its own officials since the Church correlation efforts made in the 1960s and 1970s.47 Ultimately, like everything else in the Church that she saw, male authority governed the Relief Society. She saw the organization as one more way that “Mormon doctrine and culture effectively disenfranchise women” with “traditional ideas of male dominance--and female responsibility.”48 She felt that the women of the Church performed many of the church’s more thankless tasks.49 She then quoted a disgruntled former Church member who left it when she saw “how much work the women were doing and how much credit the men were getting for it.”50

*Runner’s World* also took note of the prominent place males held in the Church as opposed to women. They had an article that praised the running prowess of many male Church members. The author, John Brant, then commented, “something basic is missing from this rosy bustling picture: women. Where are the female counterparts” to the great Mormon male athletes, he wondered?51 Brant questioned why Latter-day Saint women did not seem to have the same advantages of the Latter-day Saint way of life as the men.52

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47 Prose, “Latter-day Saints,” 59. The Relief Society was organized on March 17, 1842. The two main purposes of Relief Society were first, to provide relief for the poor and needy, and second, to save souls. Today, the organization seeks to bring people to Christ.
50 Prose, “Latter-day Saints,” 59. Prose quoted Helen Wright, a University of Utah graduate student and former member of the Church.
52 Brant, “Stormin’ Mormons,” 76.
In answer to his own questions, Brant surmised that Latter-day Saint doctrine was the cause for such discrimination, for Latter-day Saint women “can’t justify postponing or sacrificing marriage and children for the demands of an athletic career.” He suggested that the men of the Church could help women enjoy life, but that most “Mormon” men were unwilling to make that kind of sacrifice. He reasoned that such assistance would require a departure from their traditional roles. He called this discrepancy and discrimination between the sexes a “fundamental contradiction that the Mormon faith has yet to resolve.”

The New York Review used the discontinued practice of polygamy to highlight discrimination against women. According to the article, a man who was married more than once would have multiple wives in heaven, whereas women could only have one husband, regardless of multiple marriages. Therefore, the precept allowed men to have as many wives as they wanted, but allowed women only one husband. The author concluded that polygamy was “just a kind of heavenly law, which allows men more of everything.”

Homemakers and Working Mothers

A third area in which periodicals focused on the Latter-day Saint family was the issue of woman’s choice between being a homemaker or a working mother.

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53 Brant, “Stormin’ Mormons,” 76.
54 Brant, “Stormin’ Mormons,” 76.
55 There is no scripture or doctrine that either declares or denies the practice of plural marriage in the hereafter. We do not know how God will deal with that particular issue. The Church Handbook of Instructions says, “A deceased woman may be sealed to all men to whom she was legally married during her life.” Church Handbook of Instructions (published 1998 by Intellectual Reserve, Salt Lake City, Utah): 73.
Latter-day Saint women had long been portrayed in magazines as conservative mothers with large families. "The ideal Mormon woman" said a writer for *Savvy*, is "the perfect wife and mother, helpmate, PTA leader, quilter, baker, casserole maker, always well groomed, cheerful and bright, her house always sparkling clean." The Church's own stance was to declare "that a woman's central role is mother, homemaker and helpmate," and in the words of Church President Ezra Taft Benson (1985-1994), "a mother's divine calling is in the home unless 'unusual circumstances,' such as widowhood or divorce, compel her to work briefly outside it." Due to the emphasis the Church placed on the role of women, one writer wrote that women who chose to be homemakers and shun careers were genuinely respected in the state of Utah.

The Church's stance on the role of mothers shaped and molded the politics in Utah. In the magazine *Vital Speeches of the Day*, author James Clayton sensed the political power of the Church. He felt its strong public stands against abortion, the ERA, and women employed outside the home influenced many Utah voters. One article writer thought that Church leadership was driving the Church backward with respect to women; citing the example of Mary Howard from Kanab, Utah, who was elected America's first female mayor in 1912. The writer felt that the Church's emphasis on homemaking in the 1980's would ensure that modern women could not enjoy the same privilege of government leadership.

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57 Prose, "Latter-day Saints," 57.
58 Brant, "Stormin' Mormons," 76.
59 Prose, "Latter-day Saints," 59.
60 Clayton, "Different World of Utah," 187.
61 Clayton, "Different World of Utah," 186.
62 Prose, "Latter-day Saints," 58.
The New York Review included many negative comments about the dependence of Latter-day Saint women upon the male leadership, whether husbands or ecclesiastical leaders, in deciding how to govern their own lives. This article referred to Church leadership as “often sanctimonious and unattractive male Church functionaries” who by reason of their position, humiliated and criticized working women. “The elderly patriarchs,” as the article called them, could try to slow down the rate of change in attitudes about working women by “exhortations to obedience and praise of motherhood.” The article’s author did not feel that the leadership would succeed, for “exhortation rarely works very well against human nature.”

Despite the council from Church leaders for Latter-day Saint women, a federal survey in 1984 found that 54.4 percent of Utah women over the age of sixteen worked outside the home. The results indicated that Utah had the highest percentage of working women in the nation. Because seventy percent of the population of Utah was Latter-day Saint, magazines saw the high percentage of working mothers in Utah as “remarkable,” in light of the tremendous emphasis Church leaders were placing on home and family. Author Francine Prose from Savvy pointed out that many Latter-day Saint women felt they had no choice but to work outside the home, given the difficult economic situation they faced.

In spite of the economic difficulties experienced in Utah and elsewhere, in 1986 President Ezra Taft Benson, supported by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, continued to represent the official position of the Church on the issue. The New York Times

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64 Lindsey, “Growth, Prosperity, and Controversy,” 46.
*Magazine* referred to the united stance of the leadership of the Church as “resistance to . . . abortion and women working outside the home.”67

**Temple Marriage**

Marriage was another family related topic studied. Articles in magazines emphasized the differences between Latter-day Saint temple marriages as opposed to civil marriages. *Savvy* pointed out the defining difference. The author referred to the uniqueness among religions of the Latter-day Saint temple marriage in that a temple marriage extends marriage and family life into the hereafter.68

A number of periodicals referred to Latter-day Saint belief that marriage is not only for the duration of this life, but that a temple marriage is binding for eternity, meaning that marriage will continue in the next life.69 *McCall’s* included an article about Church member Marie Osmond, whose marriage was in jeopardy, to help explain Latter-day Saint doctrine. The article pointed out that because of the potential for an eternal marriage, a temple marriage indicates a “strong religious commitment.”70 With eternity in mind, Marie hoped that she would only be married once, and that the marriage would be strong and lasting.

Magazine writers identified some challenges and benefits Latter-day Saints faced because of the doctrine of eternal marriage. Mary-Ellen Banashek from *McCall’s* quoted Church member Carlfred Broderick, former president of the National Council of Family

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67 Lindsey, “Growth, Prosperity, and Controversy,” 46.
70 Banashek, “Marie Osmond’s Fight,” 43.
Relations, who expressed concern over the “idealized expectation” many Latter-day Saints have following a temple marriage. He knew of some Church members who believed that because they were married in the temple, their entire marriage would be “so blissful and magical” that it would change their spouse. Those couples were often disillusioned once the challenges of marriage came, and those marriages frequently ended in divorce.

Another article pointed out an additional challenge with temple marriages with which many Latter-day Saints had to deal. Only those who were Church members and had a recommend certifying compliance with Church standards from their ecclesiastical leader were permitted to enter the temples. Even if their own child was getting married, those without recommends could not witness the wedding ceremony.

In spite of those challenges, Esquire magazine noted that many Latter-day Saints felt that their temple weddings were much more binding than those marriages performed outside of the temple. A different magazine saw temple marriages as “remarkably stable” because of the belief that marriages can be eternal. A third article also saw the benefits of temple marriages. Because of the temple sealing, or marriage, couples were encouraged to work hard to preserve the marriage. McCall’s said this emphasis resulted in very low divorce rates among Church members, perhaps optimistically claiming that less than seven percent of temple marriages ended in divorce.

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71 Banashek, “Marie Osmond’s Fight,” 43.
72 Banashek, “Marie Osmond’s Fight,” 43.
74 Howard, “God’s Hotel,” 94.
76 Banashek, “Marie Osmond’s Fight,” 43.
Although the divorce rate was very low, *McCall's* noted that the Church was concerned about the increasing number of divorces.\(^{77}\) Church leaders continued to warn of the dangers of selfishness in marriage because of the overall effects it had on marriage and consequently the family.\(^{78}\) An article in *New Yorker* magazine portrayed the cancellation of the temple marriage as a long and drawn out process.\(^{79}\) Because of this, as well as the fear of jeopardizing their eternal rewards of temple marriage, some couples decided to just separate or get a civil divorce instead of going through the process of canceling the marriage.\(^{80}\)

**Effects of Family Issues on Image**

Utah’s birthrate was significantly higher than the national average, and Church members made up seventy percent of the population. Magazine articles included pessimistic views about large Latter-day Saint families. Concerns stemmed from those worried about overpopulation, or the inability to provide higher education to large families in Utah. This is indicated in Chapter 7, Figure 6 about Latter-day Saint people.

Large families were directly linked to Church doctrine. This also reflected negatively on the magazine’s portrayal of the Church as some writers felt that the Church used its doctrine to oppress its female members by encouraging them to have very large families. This was reflected in education, athletics, and not giving the priesthood to women. This is best illustrated in Chapter 7, Figure 4.

\(^{77}\) Banashek, “Marie Osmond’s Fight,” 43.
\(^{78}\) Banashek, “Marie Osmond’s Fight,” 43.
\(^{79}\) Shoumatoff, “A Reporter at Large,” 71.
\(^{80}\) Shoumatoff, “A Reporter at Large,” 71.
Latter-day Saint temple marriages were viewed as more likely to succeed than other marriages. This was attributed to Church doctrine. However, as some articles pointed out, some Church members had the illusion that a temple marriage would solve all of their problems, and therefore they were startled by the real-life challenges that occurred following marriage. This is illustrated in Chapter 7, Figure 10.
CHAPTER 3
CHURCH PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES

Church programs and practices also attracted the attention of national magazines. During the 1980’s, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints continued to emphasize what one article referred to as “an aggressive missionary program” that made it one of the fastest-growing religions in the world.¹ Genealogy, or the family history research program, grew as more research centers were placed worldwide. Church leaders encouraged members to search out their ancestors and then perform ordinances in their behalf in temples. Some magazines noted that the Church continued to build temples and emphasize temple work. The Church also received national attention because of the Word of Wisdom, a Church revelation that prohibits the use of tobacco, alcohol, coffee or tea, and encourages healthy dietary practices. The practice of tithing, in which the members give ten percent of their income to the Church, was frequently mentioned in magazines. Finally, some articles highlighted Church welfare assistance and humanitarian aid.

Missionary Work

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a long history of missionary work. From its beginnings, missionary efforts played a pivotal role in Church growth. American Heritage included the missionary story of Rudger Clawson, who was called to serve a mission from the pulpit while attending the Church’s general conference in Salt

¹ David Chamberlain, “Praise the Lord, Pass the Ball,” Sport (December 1984): 56.
Lake City in 1879. The magazine described how Rudger Clawson viewed the call as being from the Lord, and immediately made preparations to serve.

Unlike current missionaries, Elder Clawson did not meet his companion, Joseph Standing, until he arrived in Georgia. The magazine related that while the two were making their way to a meeting, they were met by a mob. Standing attempted to seize a weapon from one of the mobsters and was shot. All guns turned on Clawson, who folded his arms and said, “Shoot!” One of the mob cried out, “Don’t Shoot.” Clawson turned his back on the mob and retrieved the body of his fallen companion. After finding a coffin, he returned back to Utah with the body of Standing.²

The article explained how Elder Clawson later returned for the trial of the mob. The jury refused to convict the men, and all charges were dropped. Clawson realized that the mob was correct when it said, “there is no law in Georgia for the Mormons.” He was told to leave the state as soon as possible or that, like his companion, he too would be killed. Upon returning to Salt Lake City, Rudger Clawson was proclaimed a missionary hero.

The story of Rudger Clawson illustrates the willingness of Church members to perform missionary labors, despite the challenges. From the days of Elder Clawson, who later served as an Apostle for the Church, missionary work grew steadily. In 1982 Geo magazine commented on the impressive growth the Church experienced during the century. While there were only 250,000 Church members in 1900, living primarily in the state of Utah, in 1982 that number had swelled to about five million members

worldwide. In 1985, when Ezra Taft Benson became the president of the Church, *Newsweek* pointed out that he was directing a much larger Church than the one President Kimball headed beginning in 1973. The writer of the article noted that there was an additional two million converts added to the Church during Kimball’s presidency as well as the fact that the number of full-time missionaries had nearly doubled during that same time period.

Magazines attributed Church growth to the 30,000 young men and women who were serving as full-time missionaries. In 1982 the Church reduced the time span for missionary service from two years to eighteen months, which dropped the number of missionaries down to 27,000. The reason for the change was primarily due to the cost of sustaining a missionary for two years. Other reasons included accommodating military requirements for some countries as well as consideration for higher education. Soon thereafter, the length of time was again extended to two years.

Although missionaries were serving from “Tahiti to Topeka,” the missionary labors that seemed to bring in the greatest number of Church converts were those in the Philippines, Mexico, or other Latin American countries. *U.S. News and World Report* said that the Church was baptizing a new convert every three minutes. An article in *Newsweek* expressed concern about the missionaries who were perceived as “an invading

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7 Galloway, “Mormon Church Faces a Fresh Challenge,” 61.
9 Galloway, “Mormon Church Faces a Fresh Challenge,” 61.
horde, bent on branding LDS on naïve Baptist sheep.”  

The author then quoted Dr. Edmond Poole, Associate Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, who claimed that the Mormon Church was winning over Baptist souls at the rate of “231 every single day.”  

In reality, the Church had 5,000 convert baptisms in Texas over a two-year period, a rate of approximately 60 a day, with no exact data for how many were Baptists as opposed to any other religious organization.  

While many magazines commented on the rapid Church growth around the world, one magazine pointed to one location where the growth seemed less-than-impressive to the author. Speaking about the state of New York, the magazine said that there were only 4,200 Church members there, with only 350 convert baptisms in 1984.  

Church growth caught the attention of many magazine writers. Many were intrigued by the fact that the young men and women of the Church voluntarily devoted eighteen months to two years of their lives to missionary service. Not only did they give of their time, but also they served at their own expense.  

In addition to the time and financial expense of serving a mission, other sacrifices were described. Sports magazines noted that collegiate athletes who served missions were not allowed to indulge in their sport during their mission.  

Speaking of one such missionary, Sports Illustrated said that BYU football player Scott Peterson “chose his

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15 See Chamberlain, “Praise the Lord, Pass the Ball,” 60; Smith, “BYU Missionaries,” 87.
religion over America’s religion.”16 Some of these athletes would return from the mission 50 pounds lighter than when they left, with a “bellyful of parasites,” others served in countries where seventy percent of the people had or were in contact with those who had tuberculosis.17 A great many others came home with “a disease called perspective,” realizing that there were more important things in life than football.18

An article in Runner’s World pointed out that in spite of the challenges, “no draft [was] necessary for these boot camps; the boys can’t wait to go.”19 This was surprising, considering missionaries cannot swim, be alone with the opposite sex, watch television, listen to the radio, go to movies, have mustaches or beards, and worked twelve to thirteen hours a day.20

Articles often quoted famous Latter-day Saint athletes who explained why they served a mission despite all of the sacrifices required. Brigham Young University football quarterback Sean Covey explained that while football was important to him, his feelings for the Church were a lot more important. He felt that it was important to serve, wondering “why should [he] be exempt from what the prophet asked all young men just because [he] play[ed] football?”21 He concluded that although it was the toughest thing he had ever done, the experience made him a stronger individual.

Steve Young, another BYU quarterback, who didn’t serve a mission, said he wished he had gone on a mission and encouraged “any young man in the church to go

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16 Smith, “BYU Missionaries,” 87.
21 Smith, “BYU Missionaries,” 100.
when he was 19." He felt that his life was "always in a state of uncertainty" because he had not served a mission. Basketball coach Ladell Andersen attributed the unselfishness of his men's team to the fact that most of them had served missions. Olympic runner Henry Marsh told a youth group that "if it hadn't been for the mission [he] never would've been running in the Olympics" because his mission gave him a whole new philosophy of running and life.

David Alexander, a writer for *The Humanist*, wrote a fairly comical peace entitled “Fun with Missionaries.” Parts of the article had a negative tone, but his purpose in writing was to share some of the things that people could do to turn either the Jehovah’s Witnesses or the Latter-day Saints away from their door. He described the Latter-day Saints as cheery clean 19-year-olds in black pants and ties. He surmised that the Elders, as they are called, rode in pairs to “make certain that neither one has any fun or succumbs to the temptations of all those lonely housewives” they might encounter.

A more positive article was written in *U.S. News and World Report*. Writer James Fallows reported on a trip he made to Japan, during which he encountered Latter-day Saint missionaries. He described them as the “most forlorn-looking foreigners in Japan” with their short, typically blond hair, white shirts, dark suits, bicycles and religious books.” He was impressed with the ability of missionaries to learn a foreign language, proclaiming that of all the Americans he met in Japan who could “operate deftly and successfully in the local language, a disproportionate number have been

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Mormons.” He felt that Latter-day Saint missionaries were “more tolerant, less preachy, more willing to listen and gently persuade” than “other true-believer religions” he encountered. He concluded that his experience converted him to think that Latter-day Saint Church missions “make America a wiser, more competitive country and certain Americans stronger, better people.”

Genealogy

Not only did the Church receive significant publicity about its missionary efforts, but also about the family history or genealogy emphasis, what one writer referred to as “an arm of the church’s missionary program.” Magazine writers referred to Church doctrines relating to post-mortal life as well as temples to help readers understand the great genealogical efforts made by the Church. An article in *U.S. News and World Report* stated that Church members are “duty-bound” to trace their lineage back as far as they can, submit those names to a temple, and then perform baptisms and sealings in behalf of their dead ancestor. The ultimate goal was to have the entire family united in the celestial kingdom, the heavenly home for God and the faithful.

Magazine writers were often impressed by the amount of money the Church spent to provide genealogical research centers and to support microfilming efforts worldwide. In *Americana*, Michael Durham noted that in 1986, the Church owned and operated 635 branch genealogical libraries in 29 countries. The Genealogical Library of The Church of

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Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City that cost more than $9 million dollars to build also impressed him. With over 142,000 square feet, information on more than two billion people, 1.5 million reels of microfilmed records, and an International Genealogical Index data base which contained 100 million names and grew at the rate of seven million names each year, the facility was unquestionably “the world’s largest devoted to genealogy.”

Along with Americana’s compliments, New Yorker magazine said that no genealogical archive was “remotely comparable,” and that the “Mormon collection is the closest there is, and the closest there will ever be, to a catalogue of catalogues for the human race.” The New York Times Magazine and The Economist also called the Church’s genealogical efforts the largest and most comprehensive in the world.

In order to house all of the records safely, the Church built a 65,000 square foot vault in Granite Mountain between 1958 and 1963, at a cost of two million dollars. The vault was the location of all of the original information, and had the ideal conditions for permanent storage. Since microfilming began in 1938, over 2 billion names were collected in the vault. The information was guaranteed to continue to be compiled because the Church had “more than 100 cameras in forty-five countries, including China” that were gathering information. Author Alex Shoumatoff from New Yorker visited the vault and referred to it as “a modern Wonder of the World.”

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37 “Ancestor Worship,” 44.
38 Durham, “Pedigrees on File,” 32.
Shoumatoff was not the only visitor to the vault and the genealogical library. With the capacity to seat 1000 people at a time, the library was kept very busy. People were waiting to enter the building at 7:30 a.m. and still there at 10 p.m. when it closed.\textsuperscript{40} According to \textit{The Economist}, nearly 3,000 people visited the center daily and the genealogical obsession showed no signs of slowing down.\textsuperscript{41} Visitors came from around the world, and were not limited to those from the United States. There were people in the library that could speak Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Greek, and Mexican Indian dialects.\textsuperscript{42}

Not only did the Church own the vault and genealogical libraries around the world, but it also produced a computer program known as the Personal Ancestral File in 1989 so members could accelerate genealogical efforts from home computers. In a review by \textit{MacWorld: The Macintosh Magazine}, they referred to the finished product as one of the fastest, easiest to use, and least expensive genealogical programs available.\textsuperscript{43}

Almost without exception, articles written about the genealogical efforts of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were positive in nature. The only negative connotation came from \textit{The Economist}, but was really limited to the title of the article, “Ancestor Worship.” One author was skeptical about the Church’s genealogical program, but after spending a few hours exploring the facilities, began to feel a curiosity about his own family history.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{40} Durham, “Pedigrees on File,” 32.
\textsuperscript{41} “Genealogy, Knowing Yourself from Adam,” \textit{The Economist} (August 8, 1987): 43.
\textsuperscript{42} Shoumatoff, “A Reporter at Large,” 83.
\textsuperscript{44} Durham, “Pedigrees on File,” 32.
Temples and Temple Worship

Closely linked with genealogy were articles written about Latter-day Saint temples. The Church’s genealogical efforts served to provide names of deceased loved ones that could have temple ordinances done in their behalf. Articles in Esquire, Americana and New Yorker mentioned that the Church had the responsibility, doctrinally, to identify all who died without temple ordinances. Each Church member was specifically responsible for his or her ancestors first.45 Once identified, Church members could go to a temple and perform baptisms and other ordinances in behalf of their dead ancestors. According to Latter-day Saint doctrine, these ordinances are required to enter the kingdom of God. Those who had the ordinances themselves, as well as for their family, would be allowed to be together for “all eternity.”46

New Yorker quoted Church President Spencer W. Kimball (1973-1985) who in 1974 said that he foresaw the day, “not too far ahead,” when temples worldwide would be going night and day to accelerate the temple work in order to offer blessings to millions who had passed away.47 An article in Time magazine noted that under the leadership of President Kimball, the number of temples had increased from sixteen to forty seven.48 Due to the impressive size and design of the temples, numerous people visited them during open houses in which anyone could attend them. In 1985, the Salt Lake Temple, perhaps the most famous Latter-day Saint temple, had “more annual

46 “Ancestor Worship,” 44.
47 Shoumatoff, “A Reporter at Large,” 86.
visitors than Yellowstone National Park” as people came to see the outside of the temple as well as other Church buildings in downtown Salt Lake City.  

Magazine articles in McCall’s and Vital Speeches of the Day highlighted some comparisons between Latter-day Saint temple marriages and non-Latter-day Saint civil marriages. Temple marriages were “remarkably stable,” as previously mentioned, with “less than seven percent” ending in divorce. Marie Osmond was the focus of one of those articles, and she mentioned that she took temple marriage very seriously because she believed that it was “binding for eternity” instead of only until death. Ironically, Osmond was one member whose marriage did end in divorce.  

Not everyone was excited about the number of temples being built. When the Church built a new temple in Dallas, Texas, protestors gathered outside the structure to dissuade people from entering. Newsweek featured an article that included photographs of anti-Mormons wearing white temple ceremonial clothing, with people holding signs that referred to the temple as “America’s newest pagan temple.” The article also shared that in North Carolina, the Baptist State Convention promoted an anti-Mormon video called “The God Makers.” The video claimed to expose the “secret doctrines and dangerous practices” that occurred in the temples. It also distorted the Latter-day Saint doctrine that man has the potential to one day become like God.  

Part of the intrigue about temples came from the fact that not everyone could enter them once they were dedicated. Jane Howard from Esquire said that she couldn’t enter Latter-day Saint temples because she was “a gentile,” but also noted that “a lot of

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49 Howard, “God’s Hotel,” 92.
51 Banashek, “Marie Osmond’s Fight to Save Her Marriage,” 43.
Mormons can’t go in” either, even for a child’s wedding unless they had a recommend from their Church leader.\footnote{Howard, “God’s Hotel,” 94.} One writer from The New York Times Magazine felt that the issuing of temple recommends allowed a bishop of the Church too much power. If he did not give the person a recommend to the temple, he deprived both the individual and their ancestors a place in heaven.\footnote{Lindsey, “The Mormons, Growth, Prosperity, and Controversy,” 38.}

Articles that appeared in New Yorker, The New York Times Magazine, The Humanist, Americana, Time, and U. S. News and World Report spoke in detail about ordinances and things that take place in temples.\footnote{Shoumatoff, “A Reporter at Large,” 71; Lindsey, “The Mormons, Growth, Prosperity, and Controversy,” 38; Keown, “What Utah Children Believe,” 23; Durham, “Pedigrees on File,” 32.} Some of the magazine articles included accurate information about temple worship. Most of the articles were only loosely based on information that was “leaked to the press.”\footnote{Brownlee, “The Mormon Gender Gap,” 14.} One article quoted a non-Latter-day Saint who said that she knew female Church members who stayed away from the temple because they felt “discomfort and alienation” while there.\footnote{Brownlee, “The Mormon Gender Gap,” 14.} The article concluded that the Church was forced to “adapt some of its nineteenth century practices into modern sensibilities” because of rapid growth.\footnote{Brownlee, “The Mormon Gender Gap,” 14.} The Church did make minor changes in some of the wording in the early 1990’s, and a couple of magazine articles mentioned the changes. Time magazine simply referred to changes in wording as “less harsh, less threatening, less offensive.”\footnote{“Women’s Rites,” Time (May 14, 1990): 67.}
Word of Wisdom Health Practices

Various magazines made mention of the Word of Wisdom, which bans the use of certain substances. Ten magazines included articles that mentioned that faithful Church members abstain from alcohol, tobacco, coffee and tea.\(^\text{61}\)

Most articles simply referenced the Church when mentioning the Word of Wisdom, but a few of the magazine writers were interviewing Church members or making reference to them when the member referred to the health code. In *People Weekly*, BYU football player Steve Young suggested that the ban on alcohol and drugs posed no problem for him, even at parties.\(^\text{62}\) *Sports Illustrated* attributed the success of Latter-day Saint runner Henry Marsh to the fact that he had “never tasted coffee, tea, alcohol, or tried tobacco.”\(^\text{63}\) A writer from *Business Week* noted that Church member J. Willard Marriott, Jr., a successful businessman and owner of the Marriott Hotel chain, spurned liquor and coffee.\(^\text{64}\) Finally, runner Ed Eyestone attributed his success as a runner to the Word of Wisdom.\(^\text{65}\)

Two separate magazines reported about how the Word of Wisdom affected Church owned Brigham Young University’s athletic program. Peter Bart stated that the “elaborate prohibitions” imposed unique pressures when recruiting athletes.\(^\text{66}\) Bart noted one example that he felt was excessive. Apparently, one basketball player was suspended


\(^{62}\) “Bound Too Tight,” 134.

\(^{63}\) Verschoth, “Go, You Stormin’ Mormon,” 55.

\(^{64}\) Moskowitz, “Marriott, Crusader for a Moral America,” 75.

\(^{65}\) Brant, “Stormin’ Mormons,” 72.

\(^{66}\) Bart, “Prigging Out,” 92.
when the team found out that he was chewing tobacco instead of “Double Bubble” gum. Because of consequences of that nature, drug use was scarce at Brigham Young University. The second article’s writer questioned how BYU could win so many football games when players did not drink or smoke. He did point out that although alcohol and cigarettes were prohibited, the real “centers of vice” at BYU are “the uncommon number of outlets that traffic in sweets.”

Even though sweets are not mentioned in the Word of Wisdom as something to be avoided, they do not constitute part of a healthy diet.

While most of the magazines seemed to view the Word of Wisdom as a terrible restriction the Church imposed upon its members, other writers pointed out some of the health benefits associated with this principle. Author James Clayton connected the low alcohol and tobacco consumption rates in Utah with the evidence that the “average Mormon male lives six years longer and the average Mormon female three years longer” than their average American counterparts. Utah also had much lower rates of cancer, cirrhosis of the liver, and heart disease because of the Word of Wisdom, but lamentably, a much higher rate of obesity than the national average.

A separate study reported in Prevention magazine also pointed out benefits of the Word of Wisdom. It noted that the Church not only discouraged the use of alcohol and tobacco, but also encouraged good health practices, including a balanced diet. The University of California in Los Angeles studied almost 10,000 Church members over an eight-year period, finding that cancer rates and cardiovascular-disease mortality rates for both men and women were significantly lower in Latter-day Saints than in non Latter-day Saints. The study also included a subgroup of church members who had never smoked.

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67 Chamberlain, “Praise the Lord, Pass the Ball,” 57.
69 “Monitoring Mormons: Do their healthy habits pay off?” 16-17.
exercised regularly, and slept for 7-8 hours a night. The findings from this group were so convincing and positive as relating to a longer, healthier life, that the article encouraged its readers to adopt these three Latter-day Saint practices so they could live longer.

**Tithing**

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have had a long-standing practice of paying ten percent of their income to the Church. The practice is based on commandments from God. Latter-day Saint payment of tithing caught the attention of numerous magazine writers who were surprised that so many were willing to give a significant portion of their income to a church. *Esquire* reported that most members pay more to the Church each year in tithing than they pay in either state or local taxes.70 One magazine referred to tithing as “required” for all members,71 another as “voluntarily” given by families,72 and a third article said that members are instructed to contribute tithing.73

Not every member of the Church voluntarily gives tithing. In *Vital Speeches of the Day*, author James Clayton noted that considerably less than half of Church members pay tithing, but that “Orthodox Mormons,” as he called faithful, politically and philosophically conservative Latter-day Saints, do pay tithing.74 A different magazine accurately reported that tithing is required to obtain a recommend for entrance to the temples.75 *The New York Times Magazine* said that in order “to remain in good standing”

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70 Howard, “God’s Hotel,” 92.
71 Galloway, “Mormon Church Faces a Fresh Challenge,” 62.
75 Howard, “God’s Hotel,” 94.
a Church member needed to pay tithing. It reported inaccurately that anyone who fails to pay tithing “faces serious ecclesiastical consequences.” While it is true that members who do not pay a full tithing, or ten percent of their income, cannot attend the temple or serve in certain Church callings, they may attend meetings and serve in numerous ways in the Church.

In the magazine *Business Week*, there was an article about Church member J. Willard Marriott, Jr. who inherited a hotel business from his father and had been president of the company for twenty years when the article was written. The hotel business flourished under the leadership of Marriott into a three billion dollar “lodging-and-food-service giant.” In spite of his significant wealth, Marriott still contributed “one-tenth of his personal income to the church.” *Sports Illustrated* reported that Steve Young, who had just signed a $40 million contract to play football, would also give ten percent of his earnings to the Church.

Because the Church had millions of members who faithfully paid their tithing, like Marriott and Young, an article in *The New York Times Magazine* claimed that the Church was the second wealthiest religious organization in the United States, second only to the Catholic Church. Reportedly, Church assets were valued at nearly eight billion dollars and yearly income was approximately two billion dollars, with about 75 percent of the profits coming from tithes and offerings.

Some articles informed readers about how the Church used the tithing money. *New Yorker* magazine reported that the expensive genealogical program of the Church

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77 Moskowitz, “Marriott, Crusader for a Moral America,” 75.
was completely funded by tithing.\(^{80}\) A second magazine pointed out that tithing pays for Church seminaries and institutes, including salaried professionals who provide religious education for Church members from ages 14-30.\(^{81}\) Tithing also paid for the costs of building and maintaining temples as well as meetinghouses.

One Church member did face a serious consequence for failing to pay his tithing. In *America* magazine, an article was written about Frank Mason who was a member of the Church.\(^{82}\) He was employed by the Church and worked at Deseret Gym in Salt Lake City. The article stated that one criterion for Church employment was to have a current temple recommend, which meant that a member had to pay tithing. Frank was given notice that “he would lose his job unless he qualified for a temple recommend within six months.” He did not comply and was discharged. Frank sued and prevailed in court. He was reinstated to his position and given back pay. The Church filed for a reversal of the decision, but no report was given on the outcome. The author of the magazine article felt the Church “persuaded Utah to place in its law a total immunity for church-related groups” and “imposed its demand for religious observance and tithing.”\(^{83}\) He also wrote the Church was using the law to “coerce religious loyalty through the economic power employers enjoy over employees.”\(^{84}\)

**Welfare and Humanitarian Aid**

During the economic depression of the 1930’s, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints organized a formal welfare plan. The purpose of welfare assistance was

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\(^{80}\) Shoumatoff, “A Reporter at Large,” 79.
\(^{81}\) “The Mormon Example,” 181.
\(^{83}\) Ibid., 376.
\(^{84}\) Ibid., 376.
explained by then-Church President Heber J. Grant. He said, “Our primary purpose was to set up, in so far as it might be possible, a system under which the curse of idleness would be done away with, the evils of a dole abolished, and independence, industry, thrift and self respect be once more established amongst our people.” Over decades the Church refined and reviewed welfare assistance with this goal in mind to ensure that the plan met changing circumstances.

An article in Conservative Digest reviewed the “six basic components” of the Church welfare plan. These included employment services, bishop’s storehouses, which are like small supermarkets, production projects, LDS Social Services to assist with counseling, adoption and other services, (later changed to LDS Family Services), Deseret Industries, a non-profit retail thrift store used for employment training, and fast offerings and other welfare resources. After briefly explaining each component, the article said, “welfare service in the Church is not just another ‘program,’ but it is a way of life and a set of values based upon love, service, work, self-reliance, giving, and being responsible for one’s actions.”

One negative article in FDA Consumer was written about one of the canneries owned by the Church and located in Los Angeles. The Church had to recall over 20,000 cases of meat and vegetables due to “serious processing deficiencies.” An investigation at the cannery also discovered “numerous errors and misstatements among the processing records” as well as inadequately trained volunteers. The recall cost more than 1 million

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86 Lee, “When Democrats Say That We Spend Too Little,” 106.
dollars, resulted in the destruction of more than 20,000 cases of food, and the closure of
the cannery.

A more positive article was written in *U.S. News and World Report* that referred
to the Church “welfare network” which included Welfare Square in Salt Lake City.
Welfare Square was described as “remarkably like a supermarket,” but lacked a cash
register, as the only currency was a form filled out by a local bishop. They called the
food with the Church’s Deseret label, produced by the Church, “the brand that money
can’t buy.” The article also mentioned the willingness of Church members to visit others,
as well as the organization of volunteer assistance offered to others by the Church.

One example of great organization as well as service came in response to severe
flooding in Utah in June 1983. *Time* referred to the event as “the worst flooding in the
state’s history.” Homes in Bountiful, Salt Lake City and other places in Utah were
being flooded. Utah Governor Scott M. Matheson made one phone call to the Church,
which “triggered the quickest network of activity” he had ever seen. In less than one
hour over 200 members of the Church arrived to help. *Newsweek* reported that over the
next week, 20,000 volunteers assisted in Bountiful, just north of Salt Lake City, and an
additional 25,000 to 30,000 were busy sandbagging in Salt Lake City. In spite of all the
damage, the article said “Mormons disapprove of Government aid” so Church leaders
would gently discourage members from applying for federal assistance.

Stories like these propelled Church members into the national spotlight. In
November 1983, Joseph Galloway wrote an article in *U.S. News and World Report* that

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89 Galloway, “Mormon Church Faces a Fresh Challenge,” 62.
praised the Church for its humanitarian efforts. He asserted that the Church had become “America’s largest and wealthiest home grown religion by offering shelter in stormy times.” Even critics, he said, conceded that its strength and charitable nature were clearly demonstrated as thousands of Latter-day Saints who turned out to save entire towns from the raging waters that year.93

The New York Times Magazine reported another notable example of the Latter-day Saints’ willingness to assist others. In January 1985, Church leaders asked members to fast for a day and contribute the money saved to starving families in Ethiopia. One week later, Church members contributed “more than $6 million.”94

Effects of Programs and Practices on Image

The Church’s extensive missionary program received the greatest emphasis in magazines. Much of the information was positive and reflected favorably on the Church’s image. With the exception of one magazine article, the Church’s welfare program was also praised highly in magazines. These trends are shown in Figure 8 in Chapter 7.

Genealogy, temple worship, and health practices were favorably presented in national magazines. The Church built a number of temples during the time period, and genealogy received considerable attention in magazines. While some magazines viewed the health practices associated with the Word of Wisdom as negative or restrictive, most articles noted the benefits of such a lifestyle. This is shown in Chapter 7, Figure 10.

93 Galloway, “Mormon Church Faces A Fresh Challenge,” 61.
Church history, beginning in 1830 when The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized, was of some interest to magazine writers. An article in *Newsweek* entitled “Apostles vs. Historians” highlighted some differing viewpoints about presenting Church history.¹ D. Michael Quinn, former history professor at Brigham Young University, worried about the number of histories about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that concealed controversies or difficulties from the Latter-day Saint past. The article also quoted Church Apostle Boyd K. Packer who encouraged members to “see the hand of the Lord in every hour and every moment of the Church from its beginning.” The article concluded that there was no way to accomplish both viewpoints successfully.

Author James Clayton, from *Vital Speeches of the Day*, wrote a favorable article about the Church in which he noted the tension between Church leaders and Latter-day Saint historians. He saw the conflict as both unnecessary and unwise.² He referred to “Salvation History” as the ability to acknowledge the hand of God in the history of a people, which was common to many Christian churches. Also, he wrote that the major qualification of the Latter-day Saint historian should be conviction, not competence.

One of the challenges was that the Church had “the most extensive trove of historical data ever assembled about an American church.” This required historians to sift through pertinent events from the past using the personal journals of many Latter-day

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The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was also unique because its history was relatively recent, when compared with other religions. One magazine writer thought that because its foundation was so new and so fantastic, there was always a possibility of uncovering some new and spurious incident that would disprove the validity of the fledgling gospel.

**Beginnings**

A few magazines related the beginnings of the Church with the experiences of young Joseph Smith, his vision of God, and the organization of the Church. The Church began “humbly and very privately in the visions of a farm boy named Joseph Smith,” an article in Geo noted. Smith was described as “optimistic,” “gregarious,” and “one of the most controversial figures in America.” In writing that was pro-Latter-day Saint, the author of the article, Bryce Nelson, described Smith’s experience at age fourteen in the woods near his home when two “celestial personages” appeared in “human form.” During the visit Smith was told to “prepare himself for important tasks.”

About three years later, a heavenly messenger again visited Smith. He identified himself as Moroni, a resurrected being who had lived in the Americas centuries earlier. He directed Joseph to a nearby hill, where Moroni had buried a sacred record on plates fourteen centuries earlier. After “four years of personal testing,” the article continued, Smith was allowed to take the plates. Smith translated the plates by use of “a curious instrument” called “the Urim and Thumim” and entitled the finished work The Book of

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Mormon. The article included information from the Book of Mormon about the ancient
Israelites who started the book, through the visit of Jesus Christ to the inhabitants, and
finally to the destruction of the people. Although recognizing that the story was
somewhat fantastic, the article stated, “the need to defend their religion’s exotic
beginnings has always brought the Saints closer together.”

The article went on to recount significant historical events as Latter-day Saints
moved from New York to Kirtland, Ohio, then from Kirtland to several sites in western
Missouri. It told of the order given on October 27, 1838, when Missouri governor
Lilburn Boggs “proclaimed that the Mormons must be exterminated or driven from the
state.” Just three days later, “240 Missouri militiamen descended on Mormon families
who were camped at Haun’s Mill and without warning killed 17 men and boys.”

The Latter-day Saints were forced to move again, this time to Nauvoo, Illinois.
While there, they learned of the murder of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum at
Carthage Jail on June 27, 1844. Upon hearing the news, “the Nauvoo Mormons were too
stunned to retaliate.” The article highlighted one benefit of the martyrdom of the Latter-
day Saint prophet. “Just as martyrdom had solidified the early Christian Church, so it
brought the Mormons closer together.”

After Smith, the Church was led by Brigham Young, described in the Geo article
as “a down-to-earth, practical man” with tremendous organizational skills. Under his
leadership, the Saints moved again and started a new life in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847,
what Sport magazine called their “Zion.” Change noted the efficiency of the pioneers.
The advance party, which entered the valley in the morning on July 23, had plotted out

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8 Chamberlain, “Praise the Lord, Pass the Ball,” 56.
the first potato patch by 11:30 a.m. By the time Brigham arrived the next day, the field had been planted and irrigated. While in the Salt Lake desert, the Latter-day Saints developed “extensive irrigation systems” that included dams, miles of ditches, and arrangements to share water in times of drought.

Soon after creating new homes, article writer Bryce Nelson noted that the Saints became the enemy of the United States government, who “vowed to eliminate” the “twin relics of barbarism--Southern slavery and Mormon polygamy.” For decades the Church was battered by severe “anti-Mormon laws” passed by Congress, until in 1890, the Church officially discontinued the practice of polygamy.

The Geo article surmised that the nineteenth century brought the Saints “ever closer together in the face of persecution.” While the nineteenth century was characterized by unity, the twentieth century was “marked by the Church’s acquisition of wealth and power” as the Church became “the wealthiest Church per member in the country.” In the past the Latter-day Saints were bullied by the United States government, but “recently began flexing its political muscle” on issues like the Equal Rights Amendment, which advocated gender neutrality and was strongly opposed by the Church. Due to the “growing visibility and clout” of the Church, the article noted, “several recent [U.S.] presidents have included a Mormon in their cabinet.”

Not all articles about Latter-day Saint history were as favorable. The New Yorker quoted anti-Mormon Fawn Brodie as it told about Church beginnings. Brodie was excommunicated from the Church and wrote a biography of Joseph Smith entitled No

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Man Knows My History. It erroneously reported that the Smith family “did not join any church” and referred to Joseph’s ancestry as having fallen into “a senile mysticism, with lights and voices.”\(^{13}\) After telling the story of Moroni and the plates, this article said Joseph Smith had already been “fascinated” with the idea of hidden treasure and had “persuaded friends to accompany him on digging expeditions.”\(^{14}\)

This article quoted Brodie who described the Church as “a real religious creation, one intended to be to Christianity what Christianity had been to Judaism: that is, a reform and a consummation.” An article in *U.S. News and World Report* referred to the Church as “a blend of 19\textsuperscript{th}-century American liberalism and Puritanism.”\(^{15}\) It also asserted, that one of the Latter-day Saint Articles of Faith, or foundational statements of belief, holds that “God favors the United States above all other nations.”\(^{16}\)

*The New York Times Magazine* also included an article that traced Church beginnings. This article included information that was contrary to official Latter-day Saint history. After detailing the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the article said, “many of the fundamental tenets of Mormon theology have been challenged.”\(^{17}\) It gave as an example some information from anthropologists and geologists who “found increasing evidence to support a theory that American Indians are descendants of people who migrated from Asia.” The Book of Mormon asserts that the people originated from the land of Israel. The article also spoke about books that were in print in the early eighteen hundreds that were “remarkably similar” to the Book of Mormon. To demonstrate that Church leaders were nervous about people discovering the true Latter-

\(^{13}\) Shoumatoff, “A Reporter at Large,” 66.
\(^{15}\) Galloway, “Mormon Church Faces Fresh Challenge,” 61.
\(^{16}\) Galloway, “Mormon Church Faces Fresh Challenge,” 62.
\(^{17}\) Lindsey, “The Mormons, Growth, Prosperity, and Controversy,” 40.
day Saint past, the article quoted Church Apostle James E. Faust who said that those who questioned “official accounts of Joseph Smith’s experiences” could be doing so “at spiritual peril.”

Another example of a negative perspective on Latter-day Saint history came in *The Humanist* magazine. It referred to the Church as “a hybrid of Old Testament beliefs and American Idealism.” This magazine referred to Joseph Smith as an “intelligent, imaginative, but poorly educated farm boy.” Joseph “claimed” to be a prophet, and worked hard to re-create “a replica of the first Christian church of Old Testament times.” Later in the article, the author again referred to the Church as “the reincarnated Old Testament Society” because Joseph searched “the Old Testament to model a new society after the old Hebrew Christian order.”

Speaking of the principle of revelation, *The Humanist* article noted that Smith received plenty of revelations. Following the death of Joseph Smith, however, he asserted that not many revelations have been received by later prophets. He negated the validity of the newer revelations by suggesting that they “rescinded or changed revelations by prophet Smith that had become obstacles to the church’s surviving in the larger American society.”

Most of the articles that included information about Church beginnings cast doubt on the possibility of a legitimate restoration of the New Testament Church of Jesus Christ. This had a negative affect on public perception of the Church. To deny the legitimacy of the origins of a religion is to deny the validity of the entire religion. If

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18 Lindsey, “The Mormons, Growth, Prosperity, and Controversy,” 43.
Joseph Smith was a false prophet, as some articles asserted, the other foundational Church beliefs were founded on false principles and fabricated stories.

First Latter-day Saint Mission to Britain

Shortly after the Church was organized, the Prophet Joseph Smith began sending missionaries out to preach the restored gospel. History Today magazine rehearsed the first missionary efforts made by the Latter-day Saints in Britain, shortly after the Church was organized.\(^{21}\) The article described the first mission to Britain in 1837 as “an invasion based on the claim of Joseph Smith.”\(^{22}\) “The first assault” of the invasion was targeted at Preston, England. This article, which was negative, stated that Smith announced the British mission “under the pressure of a disintegrating Mormon establishment at the headquarters.” The message of the missionaries “appealed to people who were intrigued by the marvelous and inclined to believe rather than to doubt the fantastic.”\(^{23}\)

The author of this article used the British mission to reveal that Joseph Smith was trying to deceive and defraud people. She asserted that the Prophet “set certain limits” on what missionaries could share with people there, and he encouraged “sheep stealing” from other congregations.\(^{24}\) Agnes Smith, the article’s author, felt the Prophet sought to “take money from unsuspecting converts” by “delusion, imposture, or hoaxes.”\(^{25}\) She reported, erroneously, that Joseph Smith transferred almost all of the money that was given under the “Law of Consecration,” a spiritual and temporal system meant to bless all involved, especially the impoverished, into his own family account. She tried to expose

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 24.
\(^{23}\) Ibid., 25.
\(^{24}\) Ibid., 26.
\(^{25}\) Ibid., 28.
faults in the Prophet Joseph, claiming that he refused to allow the British to have any
Church leadership positions, for he believed that “only those faithful with whom he was
in close touch could be depended upon to lead the church effectively.”

However, the article asserted that despite the efforts of many to warn the ignorant,
30,000 British converted to the Church within the first twenty years. The British
missionaries were extremely successful. One example of their success, according to
Agnes Smith, was the interest of key British authors in nineteenth century literature. The
following British authors included information about the Church or its beliefs. In 1852
Henry Mayhew wrote *The Mormons or Latter-day Saints*, and Disraeli referred to the
unpopularity of the Latter-day Saints in *Coningsby*. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s first story,
*A Study in Scarlet*, which included the first meeting between Dr. John Watson and Mr.
Sherlock Holmes “was primarily based on the beliefs and practices of the Mormons.”
The last example included in the article was *The Uncommercial Traveller* by Charles
Dickens, in which he visited “a Mormon emigrant group” bound for the United States.
Although Dickens himself was “convinced that they were deluded,” he concluded that
“something had produced a remarkable result in the lives” of the Latter-day Saint
believers.

Agnes Smith concluded that the missionaries had tremendous character and were
willing to do whatever they were asked. The missionaries treated all with respect and
dignity, and therefore, enjoyed success among the poor. However, once the doctrines of
baptism for the dead and polygamy reached Britain, Smith said they “radically alter[ed]

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27 Ibid., 29.
28 Ibid., 31.
the early good impression of Mormon character and provide fuel for further attacks on Mormonism.”

The City of Nauvoo

*The Saturday Evening Post* included information about the city of Nauvoo, a city built and then abandoned by the Saints. Between 1839 and 1846 members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints congregated on a swampy village along the Mississippi River. They named the place Nauvoo, which soon became the largest city in Illinois. The favorable article described the original city of Nauvoo. When the Saints were forced to abandon Nauvoo in 1846, they left behind “a city with three newspapers, factories, a university, a brick yard, potteries, and a 158-foot-high temple.”

The article noted that once Brigham Young left with most of the Church members, a division took place. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS, later called The Community of Christ Church) was comprised of those who felt that Joseph Smith III was to lead the Church instead of Brigham Young. The city of Nauvoo was abandoned by the Saints and became the possession of “French utopian Icarians” and “later for Swiss and German immigrants.”

In 1962 Nauvoo Restoration, Inc. was created to restore the historic city. The author of the article reported that artifacts were uncovered; excavation, remodeling, and

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32 “The Reorganized Church came into being in the 1850s. The ‘Reorganization’ believed that Joseph Smith Jr. had designated his eldest son, Joseph III, to be his successor as president of the church. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was organized on April 6, 1860, at Amboy, Illinois, under the leadership of Joseph Smith III.” As quoted at http://www.cofchrist.org/seek/history.asp, the official website of the Community of Christ Church.
replication occurred. Both Reorganized Latter Day Saints and Latter-day Saints were represented in the town. William Mueller, the author of the article, toured various renovated stores and gave details to encourage others to visit Nauvoo. These included the Lyon Drug Store and Jonathan Browning’s home and gun workshop. In town one could also visit the private homes of Church leaders including Joseph Smith’s, Brigham Young’s, Wilford Woodruff’s and Heber C. Kimball’s.

The article suggested that a tour of Nauvoo could also include a visit to the original temple site, the Cultural Hall, and a museum at Seventies Hall, which was built in 1844 as a place where early Latter-day Saint missionaries gathered for lectures and worship. In August 1988, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sponsored the “City of Joseph” outdoor musical, which brought in 8,000 spectators. The *Saturday Evening Post* article stated that “whether learning or just absorbing” as a visitor one would find Nauvoo to be an “eye opener.”

**The Mormon Battalion**

After the Latter-day Saints were forced to leave Nauvoo, they began again to look for a place to establish themselves. An article in *Fate* magazine that was positive about the Church was written about the loyalty and determination of the Mormon Battalion, a group of Latter-day Saints that joined the United States military in 1846 in the war against Mexico. This article described the Latter-day Saints as “peace-loving folk who wanted nothing more than to be left alone to live and worship as they pleased.”

After being violently persecuted in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, the Saints followed Brigham Young west in search of a “promised land” where they could live as they wished. While

encamped in Iowa, the United States military asked to speak with Church leaders. The
United States was at war with Mexico, and was in need of as many men as possible.
Article author John Sech questioned whether the Saints, who “spurned violence,” would
be willing to assist the country that turned its back on them in their time of need?

Church leader Brigham Young asked his people to step forward and assist the
army. The article even included a prophetic promise uttered by President Young before
he finished speaking to the volunteers. He encouraged them to fear not, for God would
protect them. He told those who enlisted that the Latter-day Saints would neither kill nor
be killed in the war, “for God willed it so.”

After enlisting, the volunteers received one year’s pay in advance, at $7 a month.
The Mormon Battalion Volunteers gave all their pay to their families to assist them in
crossing the plains into Salt Lake Valley, and then began their own 2,000-mile march to
California to battle the Mexicans. Sech noted that their commander, Col. Philip St.
George Cooke publicly doubted the willingness of the Latter-day Saints to fight.

The article mentioned that during the march, Battalion members were hit by
malaria, which slowed them down but did not stop them. In December 1846 the
Battalion approached Tucson, Arizona, and the first Mexican army. A small group of
Mexican soldiers approached the Battalion and warned them to “Turn back or die!”
Cooke immediately ordered the troops to advance. They approached cautiously, and
upon entering Tucson were pleased to find that the Mexicans had abandoned the city and
left artillery behind.

The Battalion then continued its march toward California. Food became so scarce
that Battalion members had to kill and eat their own oxen. One night, when conditions
were extreme and they were desperate for food and water, they saw Indian campfires. Battalion members knew that there was food and water available in the Indian camp, but Cooke thought that the Mormon Battalion would likely have to fight the Indians to get it. Once they arrived at the Indian camp, however, they were pleasantly surprised as the Indians greeted the Battalion with open arms, gave them food, water and supplies they needed for the remainder of their march.

The article included one final obstacle faced by the Battalion. When at last they reached California, an old Spanish fort loomed before them. By now, Cooke knew that Latter-day Saints would fight if they had to. As in Tucson previously, as they approached the fort, they found it deserted. The *Fate* article concluded, “The Mormons had marched 2000 miles through enemy country. They neither fired at nor killed a single Mexican and not a single Mormon had been wounded or killed in battle. Brigham Young had predicted that his Mormons would not have to kill or die in battle in this war. And he had been right.”

**Polygamy**

Battalion members and Latter-day Saints congregated in Salt Lake City. Soon thereafter, doctrine about plural marriage engaged the Church in a political battle. The practice of polygamy, or “plural marriage as Mormons prefer to call it,” thrust the Church into the national spotlight. For decades thereafter, the Church received publicity, either for the practice of plural marriage, the discontinuance of it, or the historical significance of the practice on the Church. During the 1980s, the Church continued to be mentioned
in magazines in association with polygamy.\textsuperscript{34} Most of the commentary came in articles about polygamist splinter groups living in Utah. The articles mentioned that the fundamentalist Mormons were no longer members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but that they derived their ideas and lifestyle from the early teachings of Church leaders.\textsuperscript{35} Some articles mentioned that the Church excommunicated those who practiced polygamy.\textsuperscript{36}

Some magazines attempted to explain reasons why the Church began polygamy, and why it decided to discontinue the practice. An article in \textit{The Economist} stated that contemporary accounts of Joseph Smith attributed the practice of plural marriage to “his own sexual predilections” instead of “divine revelation.”\textsuperscript{37} The article’s author correctly noted that polygamy was part of the reason that a lynch mob arrested and killed the Church prophet.

Another article in \textit{The Humanist} said that Joseph Smith instituted polygamy in Nauvoo while “at his zenith of power and influence over his followers.”\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Fate} reported plural marriage was the reason Latter-day Saints were forced to leave Nauvoo, because their neighbors saw them as “an odd lot,” “evil,” and “unchristian.”\textsuperscript{39}

\textit{Economist} stated that after the death of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young moved the Latter-day Saints west to the valley of the Great Salt Lake and “came out” and practiced

\begin{footnotes}
\item[37] “Mormon Dissidents, Polygamy Under Siege,” 20.
\item[38] Keown, “What Utah Children Believe,” 22.
\item[39] Sech, “The Mormons’ Bloodless War,” 76.
\end{footnotes}
polygamy openly. The practice was discontinued in 1890 by revelation to Church President Wilford Woodruff. Magazines attributed the discontinuance to other factors. *Economist* claimed that polygamy ended only because Church leaders were sequestered and the Church’s status as a “legal corporation” was in jeopardy. An article in *The New York Times Magazine* said the reason the Church stopped the practice of plural marriage was because that was the “price demanded by Washington for Utah’s admission to statehood.” The *New York Times Magazine* article said that Church leaders, however, secretly continued to teach and live polygamous relationships until “cestial marriage could be restored.” The article concluded with the irony “now that state persecution has stopped, the official Mormon church does not seem the least interested in bringing back polygamy.”

An article in *Time* magazine quoted Church president Brigham Young who claimed that “the only men who become Gods” are those “who enter into polygamy.” *Ladies Home Journal* included an article that claimed that Joseph Smith “had thirty wives” and Brigham Young had “twenty-seven” and that plural marriage was “part of a principle called the Restoration of All Things.”

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40 Ibid., 20.
41 Ibid., 20.
43 Ibid., 20.
44 Ibid., 21.
46 Casey, “An American Harem,” 167. It is difficult to know how many plural wives Joseph Smith had. Many women were sealed, or married, to him after his death, so numbers are unreliable. Richard Lloyd Anderson, an emeritus professor of history and ancient scripture at Brigham Young University, and Scott H. Faulring, a research historian at Brigham Young University, said the following in a book review. “We know that Joseph Smith had multiple wives... [Todd M.] Compton’s list of thirty-three wives is generally supported by one or two of the following sources: early church journals and records, personal writings or affidavits from the women themselves, and recollections of family or friends.” A book review of: Todd Compton. *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997. Found at http://farms.byu.edu/display.php?table=review&id=290.
The New York Times Magazine mentioned the practice of polygamy. It said ambiguously that “according to some accounts” while the practice was still sanctioned by the Church, Latter-day Saint men who already had multiple wives would persuade other women to submit to them sexually. Those men promised eternal salvation as a reward for the women’s willingness. The article did point out that despite the Church’s historical past of polygamy, today The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is one of the most puritanical churches, with the sin of adultery being next to murder in gravity.  

One magazine included information that showed polygamy from the perspective of Latter-day Saint women. In American Heritage, there was an article written by the grandson of Rudger Clawson, an Apostle of the Church from 1898 until his death in 1943, and a polygamist. Roy Hoopes, the article’s author wrote that polygamy “was an attractive doctrine not only for men but for women, of whom there were always many on the frontier. Having their own children and a shared husband was obviously better than no husband at all.” Hoopes said doctrinally, the practice of polygamy allowed for large families to build the kingdom of God, and more women to “help perpetuate the true religion and build celestial kingdoms” in the next life. The article included a quote from one of Clawson’s wives, who “expressed a willingness” for Rudger to take another wife, as long as she was aware of the marriage. When the actual event took place, however, “in most, if not all, Mormon households, the arrival of a new wife was a time of tension and discord.”

48 Hoopes, “My Grandfather the Mormon Apostle,” 84.
49 Hoopes, “My Grandfather the Mormon Apostle,” 90.
50 Hoopes, “My Grandfather the Mormon Apostle,” 86.
The article reported that Elder Rudger Clawson was arrested in 1884 on two counts, one for cohabitation and the other for polygamy. He spent four years in prison. Later, in 1910, he served as president of the European Mission. During his years in Europe, he had the difficult challenge of overcoming his known history of plural marriage. According to the article, the British were convinced that the missionaries were kidnapping innocent young British girls and sending them back to their Utah harems. The subject of the “Mormon Question” eventually ended up on the desk of British Home Secretary, Winston Churchill, who corresponded frequently with Clawson to resolve concerns.⁵¹

During the 1980s, magazines reported on the pervasiveness of the practice of plural marriage prior to the Manifesto that discontinued polygamy. *New Yorker* reported that prior to 1890 polygamy was “practiced by probably between five and ten percent of the Mormon men, some of whom had dozens of children from multiple wives.”⁵² An article in *The Economist* said “about twenty percent” of the Latter-day Saints took up the practice, and that it was “an integral part of Mormon theology.”⁵³ *The New York Review* noted that “at one time or another, [polygamy] touched most Mormon families.”⁵⁴ Church leaders have stated that only between two and five percent of Church members were involved in plural marriage relationships, and the practice was limited and safeguarded.⁵⁵ In spite of its significance in Latter-day Saint history, *Esquire* correctly reported that today polygamy “is nobody’s favorite subject.”⁵⁶

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⁵² Shoumatoff, “A Reporter at Large,” 94.
⁵⁵ Gordon B. Hinckley in a live television interview with Larry King that aired on September 8, 1998.
⁵⁶ Howard, “God’s Hotel,” 94.
After revelation discontinued the practice of plural marriage in 1890, the Church had some respite from legal and social persecution. However, within a few decades, the Church would again be in the spotlight for denying priesthood to black men. Once again, a revelation from a prophet would put out the political and social flames. The revelation, announced in June 1978, was, as one magazine reported it, “as important and radical a departure as the abolition of polygamy in 1890.”

Revelation on the Priesthood

When Church President Spencer W. Kimball passed away, many magazines included information about growth and change in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints during his presidency. Newsweek reported that “gentle Kimball’s most significant gift to the church was the revelation in 1978 that God now wanted black as well as white males to hold the Mormon Priesthood.” U.S. News and World Report said that the revelation “broke ground” and Time referred to the revelation as “the landmark of Kimball’s reign.”

An article in The Humanist stated that “from 1835 until 1978, the precept of God’s denial of the priesthood for blacks hung on the necks of Mormons, causing them ridicule and shame.” The article explained the historical background of the revelation. During the nineteenth century, when the Church was organized, “it was a common belief on the frontier that American Indians and blacks were members of an inferior race.” The Church’s founder and first prophet, Joseph Smith, explained “the outward physiological

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57 Ostling, “Awaiting the 13th Prophet,” 85.
59 Galloway, “Mormon Church Faces a Fresh Challenge,” 61.
manifestations” of blacks and Indians as “judgments of God based upon their unrighteousness” in the pre-mortal existence. In December 1830 Smith received a revelation that “tied blacks to the children of Canaan.”

The article quoted the next Church president, Brigham Young, who stated in *Journal of Discourses* that the Lord’s curse on Cain and his descendants was “the flat nose and the black skin.” The article quoted a statement made by Church Apostle Bruce R. McConkie who said that Cain, the wicked son of Adam and Eve, was the “father of the Negroes,” and that “those spirits who are not worthy to receive priesthood are born through his lineage.” “Finally” the article continued, “in 1978 the pain became too much and the welfare of the Mormon church was at stake. The precept was ended by a revelation” to Spencer W. Kimball.

*The Humanist* reported that on June 9, 1978 when the revelation was announced, *Denver Post* journalist John Farrell recalled it as a day “when grown men cried in Salt Lake City” and others “wept with gratitude.” The city’s phone system was overloaded by phone calls trying to verify the news. It was a day on which Latter-day Saints could recall precisely where they were and what they were doing when they heard the announcement of the revelation.

*Jet* magazine said critics saw the “revelation” as “nothing more than a business move” that would allow the Church to “expand into Black Third World countries.” It also claimed the Church was “on the verge of losing its tax-exempt status for discriminating against blacks.” Finally, the article included a statement made by

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62 Ibid., 24.
Brigham Young that stated that “blacks were better off as slaves because they were incapable of ruling themselves.” This article discredited the possibility of an actual revelation, making the announcement a statement of convenience and survival rather than the will of God.

Following the revelation, The New York Times Magazine claimed that the decision “improved the church’s public standing at a time of growing criticism in the aftermath of the 1960’s civil rights movement” and opened the way for expanded missionary work in Africa and Latin America.65 One article noted that in spite of the revelation, the Church still had to overcome the stereotype of racism. U.S. News and World Report quoted Reverend Leonard Rock, president of the Barbados Christian Council who said, speaking of the Church, “with their long history of racism, we don’t see how they can genuinely serve the people here.”66

Even years after the revelation, the Church still had to overcome what some perceived as a history of racism.67 Rolling Stone wrote in 1983 that blacks were still reluctant to enroll at Brigham Young University partly because only forty-two blacks were enrolled at the school with 26,900 students.68 Sport magazine reported some challenges of recruiting black athletes for teams at Brigham Young University, described as primarily Latter-day Saints and “exceedingly white.” When black high school basketball star Jeff Chatman from Alabama got a call from BYU in 1983, he “thought it was a joke.”69 After visiting the campus, however, Chatman signed with Brigham Young University. That same year, two other black athletes signed with BYU as well. The

68 Bart, “Prigging Out,” 89,94.
69 Chamberlain, “Praise the Lord, Pass the Ball,” 64.
article hailed the three recruits as “the first blacks with a real chance to play the black man’s game at BYU.” Recruiting coordinator Roger Reid saw the signings as a “breakthrough” and believed that black athletes themselves would help the university “shuck its racist reputation.”

Just three years later, in 1986, another article pointed out that there was still progress required to eliminate the racist reputation. “What Utah Children Believe” in The Humanist magazine used a story that illustrated how Church members were still trying to overcome the perception of racism.70 Two eighth grade boys took a survey in their geography class. The survey included the following statements: “In ancient times, God cursed American Indians and blacks with dark skin. In time the curse may go away.”

Students responded with a number from 1 through 5, with 1 representing “strongly do not believe” and 5, which signified “strongly do believe.” After handing in their forms, one of the boys, who was black, asked the other student, classified by the author as “an orthodox Mormon child” who was white, “What did you put on that one about curses on Indians and blacks?” The author concluded, “In an embarrassed and almost apologetic voice, the little white boy answered, ‘I put they’re cursed. But we believe someday the curse will go away.’ The little black boy shook his head.” According to the survey of 508 students, who were predominantly Latter-day Saint, 56 percent of the class “strongly disagreed” with the statement, while eight percent marked a ‘5’ and another 7.5 percent marked a ‘4.’ This story, and other statements in magazine articles, reflected negatively on the Church’s image. Even though blacks could have access to priesthood and temple blessings, some Latter-day Saints still viewed the race as ‘cursed.’

Black Church members were the most influential at helping to overcome the perception of racism in the Church. In *Jet* it reported the death of Monroe Fleming, a black convert to the Church.\(^71\) Despite the ban on priesthood, Fleming was converted to the Church in 1952. Following the revelation in 1978, he became one of the Church’s first black priests. This article assisted in the Church’s positive image, noting that even before the revelation was received, some blacks had joined the Church. Many magazines pointed out that following the revelation the Church experienced significant growth in black nations. An article in *Newsweek* emphasized the impact of the revelation. “A practical result of that revelation was a boost in Mormon missionary efforts in the Third World, where the bar against black priesthood was seen as a theological apartheid.”\(^72\)

**Effects of Latter-day Saint History on Image**

When explaining the origins of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, some articles were fair and accurate. Other articles included quotes from former Church members who had been excommunicated, and were less favorable. Brigham Young and the faithful who followed him across the country were generally portrayed as thrifty, industrious people who suffered severe persecution. Figure 5 on origins shows the generally positive image that resulted from those articles.

Many magazines pointed out, correctly, that the Church no longer practices polygamy, and that those who do so are excommunicated. When discussing the discontinuance of plural marriage, this topic was reflected negatively, as articles saw it not as a revelation, but as an act of convenience. Other articles dwelt on Latter-day

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Saints who abused the practice. The trends are shown in Chapter 7, Figure 7 on polygamy.

Much like the ending of polygamy, the revelation that ended the ban on blacks holding the priesthood was often viewed in magazines as a reaction to popular opinion. Many articles pointed out how significant the revelation was to Church growth, and a few noted that the Church still had to overcome the image of racism. Figure 9 on race in Chapter 7 illustrates how the image was reflected variously in magazines.
Latter-day Saint people and culture were in the spotlight between 1982 and 1990. A number of members excelled in their particular field of expertise. *The New York Times Magazine* observed, “Mormons are rising to prominence throughout the country.” Donny and Marie Osmond were still popular singers in 1986. United States President Ronald Reagan called several Church members to serve in high profile positions. Many members excelled in business, including Mark Willes, who was appointed president of General Mills Corporation, and the Marriott family who owned a successful hotel chain. In 1984, Latter-day Saint gymnast Peter Vidmar won a gold medal at the Olympics, and Brigham Young University won a national championship in football. *The New York Times Magazine* article also said that the Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation recruited heavily among young Latter-day Saints who have just returned from missionary service due to their experience overseas, ability to learn and speak foreign languages, their strict morality and conservative outlook.¹

A few magazines commented on the general culture of Church members. One of the most significant events was the death of Church President Spencer W. Kimball. His death meant the selection of a new president, which received considerable attention in magazines. The calling of a new Church president gave magazines an opportunity to report about Church leadership and how the Saints felt about prophets.

During this decade the Church continued to emphasize the education of its people. Articles focused on Brigham Young University, the Brigham Young University

Jerusalem Center, and the released-time Seminary education program. As The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints grew, both it and its members became more involved in national politics. Finally, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir was mentioned in a few magazines.

**General Characterization of Church Members**

"Mormonism is not just a religion, but a culture, a way of life, an identity and a worldview," observed *Savvy* magazine writer Francine Prose. She said that included in Latter-day Saint culture are certain assumptions about character and language, certain stereotypes and even jokes. The *New York Times Magazine* referred to the Latter-day Saint culture as "more than simply a religion," but "a pervasive spiritual and social presence."

According to *Vital Speeches of the Day*, descriptive adjectives for Latter-day Saints include: "organized, middle-class, cliquish, frugal, earnest, clean-living, industrious, optimistic, pragmatic, obedient, conservative, anti-intellectual and prolific." The author of the article noted that members wanted to be liked, worried about being accepted, and tended to think the rest of the world was doomed. This article went one step further, dividing the Mormon culture into various subcultures, "obvious to those who live within the state [of Utah], but less obvious to those from outside." James Clayton, the author of the article, sensed that Church members as well as those not of the Latter-day Saint faith who lived in Utah were aware of varying degrees of commitment and compliance in Church members. Clayton was the Dean of the Graduate School of the

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2 Prose, "Latter-day Saints," 57.
University of Utah at the time. He referred to separate Latter-day Saint subcultures as "orthodox," "authoritarian," and "liberals."\(^5\)

"Orthodox" Saints, according to the article, are the most typical kind of Church members comprising "perhaps half to two-thirds" of the active membership in Clayton's opinion. They go to Church weekly, believe in divine guidance, pay tithing, obey the word of wisdom, and seldom question Church doctrine or authority. They are conservative, conventional and committed, but not aggressive.

"Authoritarian" Mormons are more conservative politically than the orthodox, and are more rigid and less compromising, author James Clayton noted. They place great emphasis on authority and obedience, and assert the absolute correctness of their own views. Because of this, they are openly intolerant of critics of the Church or its leaders. He claimed, "a substantial number of Church leaders are included in this group."

"Liberal" members were described as "much more autonomous, independent, pragmatic, and broadminded than the orthodox, and openly oppose the authoritarian mentality." They focus more on the usefulness of the Church because of the values it teaches. In general, they are more critical of Church leaders and strongly committed to intellectual freedom. He said that they make up only between five and ten percent of the membership, and there are "few, if any liberals" who serve as General Authorities in the Church.

As a group, Clayton felt that Latter-day Saints were "no longer a 'peculiar' people," but rather a typical people with a "peculiar past." He reported that each generation of members was more willing and able to accommodate and adjust to contemporary norms. The religion was still "peculiar," in that a prophet founded it, has

additional scripture, and avoided all efforts to fit under the Catholic-Protestant-Jewish umbrella.  

**Church Leadership**

*New Church President.* On November 5, 1985, President Spencer W. Kimball passed away. Five days later, the Twelve Apostles gathered on the fourth-floor in the Salt Lake Temple, to select a successor. *Newsweek* said that following a 24-hour fast, the blessing of sacramental bread and water, and much prayer, the group gathered beneath three life-size pictures of Jesus and set apart Ezra Taft Benson as the new president of the Church.  

Elder Benson was serving as president of the “powerful Quorum of Twelve” at the time, and was described in various magazines as a “controversial archconservative.”*  

*Time* referred to Benson as “a wave-making, pepper-tongued right-winger” and *Newsweek* called him “an ideological scrapper and a hard-line conservative.”* U.S. *News and World Report* expressed concern that the leadership change from Kimball to Benson could cause the “biggest schism” in the Church since polygamy was outlawed in 1890, removing all intellectuals and liberals from membership as Benson marched the Church further toward the political right.  

Concerns about Benson seemed to come from four sources. The first was the doctrinal belief that Church presidents, or prophets, were the only ones authorized to 

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9 Ostling, “Awaiting the 13th Prophet,” 85.
11 Galloway, “Mormon Church Faces a Fresh Challenge,” 61.
speak for God to all the Saints. *The Humanist* said that the prophet is in direct communication with God, and the Saints believe that Church leadership can never be led astray.\(^{12}\) An article in *Newsweek* stated that the doctrine granted Benson all the power he needed “to radically alter the affairs of the Church.”\(^{13}\) *The New York Times Magazine* called the power “absolute authority” that members were to “obey unquestioningly.”\(^{14}\) Despite those concerns, *Vital Speeches of the Day* said, “virtually every other church” has the same belief about its leadership, “although usually with less fervor.”\(^{15}\)

The second source of concern about President Benson were his well-publicized political views. Well known was the fact that he had served as Secretary of Agriculture for U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower.\(^{16}\) Magazines noted that President Benson praised the very conservative John Birch Society, called the civil rights movement communist influenced, and fought to limit price supports for farmers, “nearly causing his own dismissal,” according to *Newsweek*.\(^{17}\) *U.S. News and World Report* reported that President Benson could face resistance from female members because of his strong stance against working mothers. President Benson mentioned in Church conferences that “divorce, alcoholism, drug abuse, depression and pornography are all the results of mothers’ leaving the home in search of self-fulfillment.”\(^{18}\)

\(^{12}\) Keown, “What Utah Children Believe,” 22. Actually, Latter-day Saint doctrine does not claim infallibility for any of the Church leadership. Individual men can fall away, but the collective leadership will not be permitted to lead the Church astray. The statement referred to must be that of Church President Wilford Woodruff, who said that “the Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray... If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place.” Doctrine and Covenants, Official Declaration-I, p. 292.


\(^{14}\) Lindsey, “The Mormons, Growth, Prosperity, and Controversy,” 19, 22, 38.


\(^{18}\) Galloway, “Mormon Church Faces a Fresh Challenge,” 61.
A third source of concern came from a talk that President Benson gave at Brigham Young University in 1980 about the role of the prophet. The speech declared that doctrine that gave “all statements made by the Mormon President the same weight as the word of God.”\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Time} said the speech gave the Church leader the right to speak “authoritatively on civil as well as religious matters,” and that his counsel superseded the “words of Mormon scriptures and founders.” According to the article, Spencer W. Kimball “reprimanded Benson after that speech.”\textsuperscript{20} Joseph Carey, a writer for \textit{U. S. News and World Report} said that despite fears of some, Benson’s first talk as president “focused only on religious themes, not politics.”\textsuperscript{21}

Finally, three articles referred to a statement made by Elder Benson in 1973. When asked whether a good Latter-day Saint could be a liberal Democrat, Benson replied, “I think it would be very hard if he were living the Gospel and understood it.”\textsuperscript{22}

Stirling McMurrin, a religious history professor at the University of Utah, said that Elder Benson “has not been popular with his colleagues on the Council of the Twelve” and that “more than once” members of the First Presidency or Quorum of the Twelve “had to clamp down” on him. In spite of McMurrin’s sentiments, the article included statements by Quorum members Neal A. Maxwell and James E. Faust to the contrary, and stated that most members would support Benson as president.\textsuperscript{23}

\textit{Church Organization.} The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had a leadership made up of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the

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\textsuperscript{19} Galloway, “Mormon Church Faces a Fresh Challenge,” 61.
\textsuperscript{20} Ostling, “Awaiting the 13th Prophet,” 85.
\textsuperscript{21} Carey, “A Time of Turmoil for Mormons,” 74.
\textsuperscript{23} Galloway, “Mormon Church Faces a Fresh Challenge,” 61.
\end{flushleft}
First Quorum of Seventy. Collectively, these leaders were referred to as General Authorities. The First Presidency is composed of the president of the Church and, generally, two counselors. All members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators.24 Those in the Quorum of Seventy assist the Apostles in governing the Church worldwide.

*U.S. News and World Report* reported that many members felt that because of his age, Benson would be a “caretaker president.”25 President Benson chose “two moderates” as his counselors in the First Presidency. Gordon B. Hinckley, 75 at the time, was described in *Newsweek* as “a pragmatist who has been supervising daily operations of the church,” and Thomas S. Monson, 58 at the time, as “a former publisher.” The group of three were said to mirror the “heavenly teamwork of Father, Son and Holy Ghost.”26

Church leaders were described as “men of high integrity” who “control billions of dollars,” but don’t steal or misuse any of it.27 *Vital Speeches of the Day* stated that many view the leaders as “ultraconservative, anti-intellectual, male gerontocracy determined to preserve the status quo and fearful of trends they see in contemporary society.” Writer James Clayton, said that he personally felt the leaders were neither “authoritarian nor are they especially controversial.” He saw them as “primarily pragmatic businessmen with the special expertise of marketing religion” who were “indistinguishable from similar leaders in a variety of other fields.” “Respectability,” he asserted, was their “hallmark,” and their greatest fear was “doing anything that would bring disrespect on the Church.”

27 Galloway, “Mormon Church Faces a Fresh Challenge,” 62.
Evidence that Church leaders were not extremists came in talks they gave to members. Most talks given by General Authorities at Church conferences, which were Church gatherings held twice each year, were “conservative, moderate, and non-controversial” and “a good guide to official policy.”

Education

Education was another topic that reflected on Latter-day Saint people and culture. Since its restoration in 1830, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has placed great emphasis on education. An article in Change noted, “Utah spends a greater percentage of its total budget on higher education than any other state.” This prominence of education was directly linked to Church teachings, as well as the fact that seventy percent of the state of Utah belonged to the Church. Brigham Young University, owned and operated by the Church, received a significant amount of attention in magazines. Also during this time period, the Church built the Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, and a third topic was the released-time religious Seminary education offered by the Church.

*Brigham Young University.* Located in Provo, Utah, Brigham Young University was “by far the largest private university in the United States” with “27,000 neat, obedient, ever-smiling students.” In Utah, it was known as BYU or simply “The Y.”

*Rolling Stone* pointed out that BYU was three times larger than Notre Dame and six

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30 Chamberlain, “Praise the Lord, Pass the Ball,” 57. See also Jarvik, “Utah: Going Against the Trends,” 18; Bart, “Prigging Out,” 89.
times the size of Oral Roberts University, with Latter-day Saints comprising 97 percent of the student body.\textsuperscript{32}

\textit{Change} magazine stressed that BYU, “the educational showpiece of Mormon wealth and power,” is owned and operated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and that there is more than just an affiliation between the Church and BYU. At BYU, “Church authorities sit on its Board of Trustees; two-thirds of its student costs are paid by the Church; and its underlying philosophy—the notion of education based on revealed truth—is Mormon doctrine.”\textsuperscript{33} “Non-Mormon Gentiles,” as \textit{Rolling Stone} referred to them, “pay one and a half times the fee paid by members” and, like all other students, were required to take 15 credit hours of religion to graduate.\textsuperscript{34}

Due to Church funding, BYU does not accept large sums of federal money for buildings, program development, or other uses and thereby avoids some of the financial difficulties experienced by other universities. Jeffrey R. Holland, president of BYU from 1980-1989, told one magazine that the only federal money accepted was from fees for work done on a contract basis. He also stressed that the university did not seek federal funding because it did “not want to have to defend its institutional policies.”\textsuperscript{35}

\textit{Rolling Stone} compared BYU to middle America, with a squeaky-clean student body, men without beards, and not a single “longhair” in sight. When the loudspeaker played the national anthem twice each day, the “entire campus” came to “a respectful halt.” Despite these things, the author of the article felt that everything was “slightly askew.” Part of the reason had to do with “the honor code,” which students signed to

\textsuperscript{32} Bart, “Prigging Out,” 89.
\textsuperscript{33} Jarvik, “Utah: Going Against the Trends,” 18.
\textsuperscript{34} Bart, “Prigging Out,” 90.
\textsuperscript{35} Jarvik, “Utah: Going Against the Trends,” 19.
witness that they would not smoke or drink. It also encouraged chastity, sex being prohibited for everyone but married couples. There was a sigh of relief on campus when *Playboy* magazine announced BYU as the school with “the lowest sexual temperature.” Other concerns from the magazine were that gay students were expelled from school, and certain speakers or movies were banned from campus. It also claimed that the administration exercised excessive censorship by denying an alternative newspaper, called *The Seventh East Press,* to be sold on campus.  

Brigham Young University contributed very positively to the Church’s image as it received national recognition for education. BYU received accolades in the fields of law, computer science, business, organizational behavior, chemical engineering, chemistry, statistics and languages. Another magazine added management, accounting, and research study in coal gasification and energy consumption to the list.

The success of BYU athletic teams also brought positive recognition to the school and the Church, and provided one more means of proselytizing. BYU athletes were praised for not arguing with officials and their good sportsmanship. Not only were they respectful, but their teams also excelled. As *Sport* magazine pointed out, in any given year BYU could be in the NCAA Top 20 in football, basketball, baseball, golf, and track. With its own satellite TV network and a side-band FM radio station reaching most of the western states, wherever BYU played, a good percentage of the crowd was faithful Church members.

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36 Bart, “Prigging Out,” 89.
38 Bart, “Prigging Out,” 90.
39 Bart, “Prigging Out,” 94.
40 Chamberlain, “Praise the Lord, Pass the Ball,” 56.
Articles in *Sports Illustrated* in 1985 mentioned the national championship won by the BYU football team and its 25th straight football victory against Boston College in the season opener. In 1988 another article attributed the very solid men’s basketball team to the number of returned missionaries on the team.

*The Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center.* In 1968, Brigham Young University quietly opened a center for Near Eastern Studies that operated out of various rented quarters and offered semester-long courses to students from the main campus in Provo, Utah. In 1980, the Church was offered a long-term lease for its own campus on the Mount of Olives. The lease was approved after the Church “contributed $1 million for one of the city’s new parks.” Plans began immediately for a $15 million dollar, eight-story building, which included a 400+-seat concert hall, on a 6.6 acre plot near Hebrew University with a panoramic view of Jerusalem. Israeli authorities approved the plans in 1984 and construction began.

The location and magnitude of the building brought the Center to the attention of many in Jerusalem, particularly the Orthodox Jews. They began protesting the construction of the Center, which they viewed as “a beachhead from which the Mormons plan[ned] to launch a massive effort to convert Jews.” Ninety-six Israeli intellectuals released ads in newspapers to halt the construction of the Center, claiming, “we are

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convinced that this group wishes to Mormonize the people of Israel. One group of more than 4,000 protestors marched on the site in an attempt to stop construction.47

In response to the allegations, Church leaders made “a historic pledge to the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament” not to use the Jerusalem Center for proselytizing.48 Jeffrey R. Holland, president of Brigham Young University, went to Jerusalem and pledged that “any Mormon teacher or student” who proselytized would be sent home and Church President Ezra Taft Benson promised the Church would obey all Israeli laws.49 With the assistance of “several influential Israelis,” the Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center was completed.50

Seminaries and Institutes of Religion. Another branch of Church education that received attention in magazines was Church Seminaries and Institutes. Early in the 20th century, the Church began organizing places of religious instruction for all Church members from ages 14 to 30. These schools for religious instruction were located near junior high schools, high schools, colleges and universities. Seminaries provide religious instruction for all Church members from grades nine through twelve. After high school, students attend Institute, which offers religious instruction for everyone from age 18 to 30. Classes were offered as a released-time program, meaning students were released from their public school or college to attend a religious course at a local building not affiliated with the school. In 1948, the Supreme Court considered the released-time

46 “BYU in Zion: Trouble for a Mormon Center,” 73. See also William E. Smith, “This Year in Jerusalem,” Time (February 24, 1986): 37; Carey, “A Time of Turmoil for Mormons,” 74.
49 “BYU in Zion: Trouble for a Mormon Center,” 73.
50 “BYU in Zion: Trouble for a Mormon Center,” 73.
privilege, and declared religion classes could be taught “during public school hours but not in public school buildings.”

An article in America magazine used the released-time religion classes offered by the Church as a model for other religious groups to emulate. Where there were sufficient students, at least 100, the Church erected a building near the public school so that students could attend during the regular day. Full-time salaried professionals generally staffed these with the assistance of volunteers. Where distance was too great, or numbers were too few, the Church provided religious education either before or after school. The magazine’s author invited both Catholics and Protestants to consider a similar program for their youth.

Latter-day Saint Wealth

Significant amounts of money are required to effectively administer the various Church programs. Esquire magazine noted that of Joseph Smith’s revelations, “88 deal with economics.” The Church uses money in various ways. Educational expenses are only part of the Church’s total budget. It has beautiful church houses, temples and office buildings worldwide. It also runs an expensive and extensive missionary program. According to Newsweek, in Mexico the Latter-day Saints were “frequently depicted as a free-spending gringo sect out to separate the natives from their culture.” The Church acknowledged spending a lot of money on the Mexican Mission, but pointed out that the beautiful, expensive buildings were a part of Latter-day Saint worship.

52 Howard, “God’s Hotel,” 92.
In 1983, *U.S. News and World Report* mentioned some of the things owned by the Church. These included a “chain of TV and radio stations, insurance firms and real-estate ventures.” These assets alone were reported to yield four million dollars to the Church annually. During 1985, articles estimated the annual income of the Church. *Time* estimated annual contributions at nearly one billion dollars. *Esquire* guessed that annual income was $1.5 billion, making it one of the 250 largest corporations in the United States. The following year, *The New York Times Magazine* included an article about the Church, where yearly income was estimated at two billion dollars, and the total assets were considered to be nearly eight billion dollars. If the numbers were correct, it made the Church “enormously wealthy, richer probably than any other religious organization in the nation except the Roman Catholic Church.”

*America* magazine noted in 1987 that the Church owned three television and twelve radio stations, extensive agribusiness and a large securities portfolio. Above and beyond those already mentioned, *The New York Times Magazine* mentioned a daily newspaper, also more than 800,000 acres of working farmland from Florida to Washington State, a company that developed industrial parks, hotels, orange groves, several food processing plants, department stores, office buildings and other temporal assets worth billions of dollars.

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54 Galloway, “Mormon Church Faces a Fresh Challenge,” 62.
56 Howard, “God’s Hotel,” 92.
Politics

One magazine referred to the Church that Brigham Young introduced to Utah as “the closest thing to a theocracy America has produced.” In Utah, where seventy percent of the population were Latter-day Saints, the Church dominated “political, social and business life.” Under President Ronald Reagan’s leadership, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints became more influential in Washington.\(^59\) \textit{U.S. News and World Report} observed that the Church had “immense political and social impact on Western states,” and that it was gaining influence nationally and internationally where the Church had missions.\(^60\)

One example recited in magazines where the Church was successful in exercising political influence was the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment, which advocated gender neutrality and was strongly opposed by the Church. \textit{Time, Vital Speeches of the Day, The New York Times Magazine} and \textit{U.S. News and World Report} all mentioned that the Church played a major role in stopping the Equal Rights Amendment.\(^61\) \textit{U.S. News and World Report} explained the reason the Church fought publicly against it was because Church leaders deemed it “a moral and family issue important enough to take sides on.”\(^62\)

The Church was also mentioned for its political stance in two articles that appeared in the same issue of \textit{Time} in 1985. Both articles were about Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority.\(^63\) In the first article, the Church was listed among other religious organizations that were disturbed about the moral collapse of society. Specific issues that

\(^{59}\) Lindsey, “The Mormons, Growth, Prosperity, and Controversy,” 22.
\(^{60}\) Galloway, “Mormon Church Faces a Fresh Challenge,” 61.
\(^{62}\) Galloway, “Mormon Church Faces a Fresh Challenge,” 61.
identified moral collapse were abortion, drug use, gay liberation, the glamorization of promiscuity and the increase in the number of children raised by unwed mothers. The second article said that Mormons, Catholics, and Jews were all scorned in the past by fundamentalists, but now they are aligned on issues important to the Moral Majority.

Another topic that Church leaders and members became politically active about was the issue of abortion. Two magazines briefly mentioned abortion as an issue that the Church strongly opposes.64 One article in *Newsweek* entitled “Abortion Politics in Idaho” manifested how Church members influenced politics in that state. The article referred to Idaho as “heavily Mormon and religiously conservative.” A bill that would bar abortion for rape victims who did not report the rape to police within seven days of the incident easily passed both houses of the Idaho Legislature. Governor Cecil Andrus, a democrat who personally opposed abortion and was running for re-election, vetoed the bill. Anti-abortion groups were enraged, and warned that the governor would pay politically for his decision.65

Although the Church had frequently been involved in politics, it was not always successful. *Vital Speeches of the Day* listed some of the fights that the Church lost. One example was when the Church tried to encourage the reapportionment of Utah. Author James Clayton from the University of Utah said that had there been a reapportionment of boundaries, it would have strongly favored the Church. It did not happen. The Church also fought unsuccessfully for Sunday closing laws, and had to compromise on liquor by the drink, which allowed patrons to purchase one drink of alcohol at a time in licensed

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venues. Clayton noted that in Utah, the Church “lost about as many political battles as it has won.”

Two Latter-day Saint politicians were written about in national magazines. Harry Reid, a Democratic Congressman from Nevada, was mentioned briefly in a *Time* article. His opponent tagged him “a Tip O’Neill liberal” but others saw him as “a blond, soft-spoken Mormon.” The other, Evan Mecham of Arizona, received more attention which reflected negatively on the Church. Articles appeared in both *Time* and *Newsweek.* Mecham was described as an “archconservative” and “grandfatherly Mormon.” After five losses, he was finally elected Governor. Just ten months into his service, the people were calling for a recall on the election and Mecham faced a “grand jury investigation” that lead to impeachment one year later. Mecham had rescinded Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, referred to blacks as “pickaninnies” and asked for a list of all gay state employees.

The situation was complicated further by Latter-day Saint cartoonist Steve Benson, the grandson of Church President Ezra Taft Benson. Benson drew cartoons in *Doonesbury* that brought The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints into the forefront. Church leaders in Salt Lake City refused to get involved, but there were rumors they would quietly ask Mecham to resign rather than tarnish the Church’s image.

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69 Steve Benson and his wife Mary Ann left the Church in 1994.
The Mormon Tabernacle Choir

Mention of the name Mormon automatically brings to mind the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Six separate articles mentioned the choir, but mostly in passing. Fortunately for the Church, the choir always portrayed a positive image. Vital Speeches of the Day invited its readers to look to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir for “typical characteristics of current Mormon activity” than to the “authoritarian characteristics so frequently mentioned in the press.”

Jane Howard from Esquire invited visitors to Salt Lake City to stop by the Tabernacle on Temple Square for either Sunday-morning performances or Thursday-evening rehearsals. Along with praising the choir, she was amazed at the building. The acoustics were so flawless that “a pin dropped could be heard from 230 feet away.”

People Weekly included a section on television reviews. It included a review of “With the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Shirley Verrett,” a television show scheduled to air on PBS during the Christmas season. The show was given a B+ rating, and the choir was lauded as “the best at belting melodies.”

Another positive commentary on the Mormon Tabernacle Choir was found in Time. A group of 30 to 40 Russians were coming to Magna, Utah, to inspect the destruction of warheads. Mentioned as “a foretaste of its hospitality,” the Russians were invited to eat banana splits and listen to a rehearsal of the choir.

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71 Howard, “God’s Hotel,” 94.
Effects of People and Culture on Image

Latter-day Saints were generally portrayed in magazines as clean, hardworking, honest, productive people. Educational pursuits reflected positively on the Church, and writings about the Mormon Tabernacle Choir provided positive commentary for the Church. Concerns about members came from their unquestioning willingness to follow their leaders, who were sometimes portrayed as oppressive in magazines. These mixed trends are shown in Figure 3 about culture, Figure 6 on people, and Figure 4 on hierarchy.

Several magazines included information about the Church’s financial holdings, as well as how it used its resources. Almost every article that was written about the Church’s socio-economic condition reflected positively on the Church’s overall image. This is illustrated in Chapter 7, Figure 11 on socio-economics.
CHAPTER 6

FRAUDS AND SCANDALS INVOLVING CHURCH MEMBERS

At the conclusion of 1980, membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints surpassed 4.6 million.¹ As the Church continued to grow, it received greater publicity and media coverage. The Church and its members also became a target of frauds and scams. Between 1982 and 1990 a number of fraudulent scandals circulated in the state of Utah, many of which affected numerous members of the Church. Perhaps the largest fraud scheme ever targeted at the Church’s foundational beliefs came during this period. The New York Review said that because the formation of the Church was so recent, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was “at the mercy of history in a way the ancient religions are not.”²

The Hofmann Documents

In April of 1985, the official Church News of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints published a 637-word document that was discovered in 1983. The document was donated to the Church. Dated “seven months after the publication of the Book of Mormon” the letter was “one of the earliest accounts of Joseph Smith’s finding of the Book of Mormon.”³ The letter was said to be written in 1830 by Martin Harris, one of the first Church converts and one of the original witnesses to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

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² Johnson, “The Lost World of the Mormons,” 29.
The Harris letter deviated from Joseph Smith’s description of finding the plates from which he translated the Book of Mormon. It received the common name of “the salamander letter” or “the white salamander letter” in periodicals because it claimed that Smith was told by “an old spirit to dig up the gold,” but when he picked “it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole & struck” him three times.⁴ As reported in *Time* magazine, the letter was addressed from Harris to a newspaper reporter from New York, and differed “markedly from the official account [of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon] written by Smith in 1838.”⁵ The salamander letter contradicted the original statement of Joseph Smith, which asserted that he received the plates from an angel of God.

Some Church members were deeply troubled when the document first surfaced. *Time* magazine quoted some Latter-day Saint concerns. “It’s an incredible crisis of faith for me” confessed one member, who added, “It means our historical foundation becomes a nice story that has no connection to reality.”⁶ Another individual saw it as evidence “that things have gone awry in the church.”⁷

Amid the concern, President Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the Church’s First Presidency,⁸ questioned the authenticity of the document, referring to it as simply

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⁶ Ostling, “Challenging,” 44.
⁷ Ostling, “Challenging,” 44.
⁸ “Church Administration,” *True to the Faith, A Gospel Reference,* (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, 2004): 34. This book defines the First Presidency as follows: “The President of the Church presides over the entire Church. He and his counselors, who are also prophets, seers and revelators, form the Quorum of the First Presidency.” Gordon B. Hinckley was serving as the Second Counselor to President Spencer W. Kimball in May 1985.
"interesting." Newsweek quoted President Hinckley as he cautioned Church membership in October 1985 to "beware of critics who might try to shake their faith amid the debate over the documents." In January of the following year The New York Times quoted both President Hinckley and Apostle Dallin H. Oaks who cautioned members about those who "were poking into all the crevices of our history" with "biased" reporting "taken out of context." A few months later, in April, Elder Boyd K. Packer, an Apostle in the Church told an interviewer with U.S. News and World Report that "the letter really has no bearing on the validity of the church." 

As the salamander letter gained more publicity, reports of other documents that attacked the Church's foundational beliefs surfaced. Newsweek revealed that in 1980 and 1981, Mark Hofmann, "a shadowy, highly successful dealer in Mormon documents," delivered two historic papers to the Church. One of the papers claimed "to be a "blessing" by Joseph Smith promising his son the right of succession" instead of Brigham Young, thereby implying "Young's succession [to the Presidency of the Church] was illegitimate." The second document contained "hieroglyphics from the golden tablets" which were the basis for the Book of Mormon. A third set of papers Hofmann attempted to sell to the Church were known as the "McLellin Collection." William E.

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9 Ostling, "Challenging," 44.
10 Jennet Conant and George Raine, "The Mormon Mystery," Newsweek (October 28, 1985): 44. (Speaking to the men of the Church in a Priesthood session of general conference about critics of the Church, Gordon B. Hinckley stated, "We have them. We have always had them. They are not as vociferous as they once were. Noisy as they are, they are not as threatening. People ask whether we are fearful of research of our history. My reply to this is no, of course not, provided it is done with balance and integrity... I think it unlikely that any of us will be commended for wearing out our lives in an effort to find some morsel of history, incomplete in its context, to cast doubt on the integrity of this work." Gordon B. Hinckley, "Questions and Answers, Ensign, November 1985, 49.)
11 Lindsey, "The Mormons, Growth, Prosperity and Controversy," 42.
14 Conant, "The Mormon Mystery," 44.
15 Conant, "The Mormon Mystery," 44.
McLellin, the supposed author of the collection, “was an early church apostle who later turned apostate.” These documents were said to contain “embarrassing stories about [Joseph] Smith” and “discussions of early Mormon scriptures that may impeach the church’s canonical history.”

Hofmann was described in The New York Review as “a model Mormon boy” whose childhood was bound up with Church activities, family solidarity, and “the shadow of polygamy.” The article hinted that Hofmann may have tried to alter the Church’s foundational beliefs because the practice of his polygamous grandmother was “a painful secret the family did not like to discuss.”

Unraveling the Salamander Letter Mystery

As questions continued to circulate regarding the content and validity of the salamander letter, the docudrama turned into a murder mystery. Time magazine released an article that reported events which occurred on October 15, 1985, when “two pipe bombs set inside harmless-looking packages” exploded when handled, killing two individuals. The victims were both members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The first was Steven Christensen, a Salt Lake City businessman and Latter-day Saint bishop who was killed when he retrieved the package from outside his office. Just three hours later, in a nearby suburb of Salt Lake City, Kathleen Sheets met a similar

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16 Amy Wilentz, “A Latter-Day Forger,” Time (February 2, 1987): 32. William E. McLellin was ordained an Apostle on February 15, 1835. In 1844, after he was excommunicated from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he followed James J. Strang, the organizer of a splinter group opposed to Joseph Smith, to Voree, Wisconsin. He died April 24, 1883.
fate outside her home when she picked up a package left by her garage. Sheets was the wife of J. Gary Sheets, also a bishop in the Church, and a former business partner of Christensen's.

At first the bombing incidents seemed to revolve around an investment firm, CFS Financial Corp., owned by Christensen and Sheets. As reported in People Weekly, the company was reportedly $5.4 million in debt. Police speculated either “angry investors” or the connection of the two men to “controversial historical documents concerning the Mormon Church.”

“In a flash,” however, as People Weekly reported, “the entire case turned on its axis and landed in the strange labyrinth of Mormon history.” The day following the original two bombings, a third bomb exploded in the trunk of Mark Hofmann’s car in downtown Salt Lake City. Inside the remains of the vehicle, police found “what may be the much sought-after McLellin papers... as well as receipts for cashier’s checks, an airline ticket and lengths of pipe similar to those used in the bombs.” Although he was not killed in the bombing, Hofmann was seriously injured and hospitalized. The bombings and murders caused the Hofmann case to get much more coverage in magazines. Time, Newsweek, People Weekly, The New York Times, U.S. News and World Report, and The Economist all included articles about the event.

Hofmann originally denied his connection with the bombings, but later pleaded guilty to reduced charges of second-degree murder and to two counts of theft by

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21 Conant, “The Mormon Mystery,” 44.
deception for selling forged or nonexistent documents. A writer from Time magazine retraced the events that led up to the murders. Christensen and Sheets began working with Hofmann in 1984, when they purchased the salamander letter from him for $40,000.

At the time of the murders, Hofmann and Christensen were negotiating for Hofmann’s greatest find, the McLellin papers. Hofmann was unable to deliver the papers and Christensen may have begun to suspect forgery. Christensen was killed just two hours before he was to inspect the documents Hofmann claimed to possess.

Hofmann was in financial ruin and desperate for money just prior to the murders. According to a writer in People Weekly, Hofmann had paid $5000 in earnest money for a $650,000 house in south Salt Lake, and a payment of $200,000 was due on the Friday before the bombings. Negotiations with a group of Church members became “frantic” at that time. Allegedly, Hofmann had already bargained with Church members to obtain the McLellin collection for the church for $185,000, and he had already received $150,000 for the documents from another investor. As deadlines approached, and documents were unavailable, Hofmann resorted to murder. Hofmann admitted guilt to forging the Harris letter as well as some of the other 48 documents he sold to the Church.

Unquestionably, the Mark Hofmann case was the most influential case of fraud encountered by the Church during the decade, and perhaps since its beginnings. When the scandal was first reported, magazine articles reported the salamander letter as though it was a legitimate letter with significant implications for the foundational beliefs of the

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28 Plummer, “Mysterious Bombings, 123.
30 Ibid., 32.
Church. As one writer for *Time* noted, “the Church is not likely to recover quickly from this painful and discomfiting episode.” As more details were released, articles simply focused on the facts of the case.

Almost no mention was made of either Hofmann or the salamander letter once the case was resolved. *The New York Review* used the case to demonstrate “the misery that can accompany the loss of faith.” The article referred to Hofmann as “a disappointed apostate” who had set out to alter the Church’s history. Hofmann was eventually convicted of the two murders, but allowed to plea bargain. The case never went to trial, based on the understanding that “in return for a guilty plea [Hofmann] would be sentenced as though for manslaughter.” The article stated that “a renegade Board of Pardons” that enforced a life sentence changed the outcome.32

**Other Scandals Involving Church Members**

There were other financial scandals reported in periodicals that targeted the Church’s membership, or in which members got involved. Some were so large in scale, or so easy to set up, that Utah was referred to in the press as “the sewer of the securities industry” and “the stock-fraud capital of the nation.” One article in *Forbes* magazine reported that over several years, scandals in Utah “have taken at least 9,000 people (1 out of every 100 adults in the state)...[for] more than $200 million.” With so many in the state of Utah falling prey to the scandals, articles pointed out attributes esteemed highly

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34 “The ‘Stock-Fraud Capital’ Tries to Clean up its Act,” *Business Week* (February 6, 1984): 76.
in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or connections within the Church structure, that allowed Utah to be a national hotbed of fraud.

Another article in *Forbes* magazine noted some interesting connections between scandals and Church membership in Salt Lake City. The magazine’s writer, Richard Stern, reported “that 70% of the population is Mormon, one of the most homogeneous, hardworking and thrifty communities in America” which “creates a fertile soil for swindles.”36 One of the reasons stated for this was that, according to the article, “Mormon lay preachers. . . see nothing wrong with getting a good return on their money.”37 When things seemed to go well for a Church leader, *Forbes* continued, they would pass information about the great deal on to the members of their congregation. According to the article, another reason for their gullibility was their “faith in religion and one another” which “Utahans pride themselves on.” This caused many to be victimized by individuals who claimed Church membership.38 Stern concluded that “most of those bilked are Mormons, and the bilkers, too, profess to be upstanding members of the church and use church connections.”39

Another writer commented on what he called “the Mormon connection.” He said that Church members are “likely to accept without question an investment recommendation made by another Mormon.”40 Those devising scandals would exploit this confidence by “trying to bring church officials into investor groups or by portraying themselves as good, church-going Mormons.”41 The scandals became so frequent that

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36 Stern, “Now you see it,” 33.
37 Ibid., 33.
38 Ibid., 34.
39 Ibid., 33.
40 “Stock-Fraud Capital,” 76.
41 Ibid., 76.
Church officials publicly warned Church members “to be less trustful- and to start reading the fine print.”

Some scams were “custom-tailored” for Church members living in Salt Lake City. According to one article, at least one investment company “promised a preferential rate to the parents of Mormon missionaries on a supposedly fool-proof system.” Although investors from “at least 22 states” got involved with the company, most of the investors were from Utah. The company kept afloat for about three years by “using cash from new investors to make the payments to earlier ones,” costing residents of Utah up to “$200 million through unregistered securities, fraud, and flagrant mismanagement.”

Another custom-tailored scam promised to “set up a trust for your child’s education or his 18-month Mormon mission.” As a writer from Newsweek claimed, “if a promoter can entice one Mormon into his scheme, the money will pour in.” One scheme seemed particularly successful because the salesman was “a former instructor at Mormon-run Brigham Young University.” Many of the articles used either the Mormon connection or the fact that Church members are generally trusting in nature to establish their point. The tendency for Church members to unquestioningly trust other Church members solely based on membership reflected unfavorably on Church members.

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43 “Stock-Fraud Capital,” 76.
44 Ibid., 76.
45 Ibid., 76.
46 Ibid., 76.
47 Stern, "Now you see it," 33. The article was written in 1983. In 1982 the Church reduced the time period for missionary service from two years to eighteen months because of consideration for the high costs of missionary service. Shortly after this article was written, the Church extended the length of service to two years.
Effects of Frauds and Scandals Involving Church Members on Image

Magazine articles that mentioned the Salamander Letter presented the Church in an unfavorable manner. When the Mark Hofmann case was initially reported, articles in *Time* and *People Weekly* accepted the fraudulent documents as valid. One writer referred to the letter as causing “tremors of concern” for the Church, but claimed that Church members would blindly follow their leader instead of looking at the facts of the case objectively.\(^{50}\) He concluded by stating that the letter “proves that magic and occult practices were present at the outset of this important religious movement.”\(^{51}\) The Salamander Letters’ most harmful impact was on the portrayal of origins of the Church, as shown in Figure 5 in Chapter 7.

The other impact the scandals had on the image of the Church was that they often showed members as gullible and greedy. This tarnished the view of Latter-day Saints as illustrated in Chapter 7, Figure 6 on people. These articles also affected how people perceived the leadership, because Church leaders were often portrayed in magazines as authoritarian in allowing only certain parts of history to be examined. This negative impact is shown in Figure 4 on hierarchy.

Whether discussing the ‘Salamander Letter’ or frauds in general, most of the articles written were neutral in their stance toward the Church and their presentation of facts. While they pointed out weakness in certain Church members, they also sought comments from Church leaders that included warnings or cautions about the scandals. Most articles tried to present facts and kept the reporting accurate.

\(^{50}\) Ostling, “Challenging Mormonism’s Roots,” 44.
\(^{51}\) Ibid., 44.
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints experienced tremendous growth between 1982 and 1990. As it grew, it gained greater notoriety in national magazines, and also received more criticism. These years were both challenging and beneficial to the public Church image. Reading and evaluating articles showed how people, events, or programs could affect the image because, as Richard Cowan stated in chapter one of this doctoral dissertation, national magazines present “facts and views on issues in exactly the same way at the same time throughout the entire country.” This study used national magazine articles which reflect prevailing points of view that helped formulate public opinion about the Church.

Three studies preceded this thesis. This thesis used the same methodology as Richard O. Cowan, Dale P. Pelo and Adam Nielson in accessing and analyzing data. First, articles were gathered by searching under various headings in the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature as well as computer databases. Magazines that appealed to a national audience were used, while religious magazines were excluded to avoid bias. A total of eighty-six articles were located using these methods, with nineteen published in 1985. Each article was read and given an overall rating of a −2 for obviously biased, “anti-Latter-day Saint” writing, a −1 for unfavorable treatment of the Church or its members, a 0 if it was neutral, a +1 for a favorable description and a +2 if it was “pro-Latter-day Saint” biased. Along with rating each article as a whole, individual themes within each piece were rated using the same criteria. This study utilizes the same ten
themes as the previous studies: cultural, hierarchy, origins, people, polygamy, programs, race, rites, socio-economic, and theology. Each theme will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Overall Treatment of the Church in National Periodicals

Figure 1 shows two things. First, the total number of articles found during each year, and second, the average rating of those articles. Many articles written during the decade were neutral in their presentation about the Church, and only a few were anti-Latter-day Saint. The image of the Church moved to a more negative portrayal in 1985 as President Ezra Taft Benson became the new Church president, and the Church dealt with the Hofmann scandals. Most of the articles that reflected negatively on the Church throughout the decade were about how Latter-day Saint women seemed to be oppressed. This resulted in the negative rating for 1990, as four of nine articles for the year dealt negatively with women’s issues.

Figure 2 shows whether the articles as a whole and themes of the articles portrayed the Church in a negative, neutral, or positive way during each year of the study. This is helpful in gaining a clearer picture of how the Church was perceived and for ascertaining whether the image of the Church was moving in a more positive direction over time. The figure includes both the direction of the articles and the direction of the themes. One article could include various themes, each with a different rating. An article could receive a favorable rating because many themes mentioned the Church positively, but the article could include negative descriptions of the Church on different themes. As
Figure 1
Total Number of Articles and Average Ratings Per Year

Figure 2
"Direction" of the Periodicals' Image: 1982-1990
seen in Figure 2, the general direction of the themes is very similar to the direction of the articles.

Both themes and articles had the most positive image in 1988. Articles written in 1988 focused on successful Church programs, like welfare and genealogy, as well as positive events from Church history. The years 1984 and 1990 were the least favorable years, due to the fact that both years included many articles about perceived oppression of women in the Church.

Throughout this time period, the trend line for the articles and the themes not only followed a similar direction, but also remained close to the neutral line. One reason for this is shown in Table 1. This table shows every magazine that was used in this study, the number of articles in each magazine that mentioned the Church, as well as a rating for each magazine. The magazine rating was calculated by averaging the ratings of each article within the magazine. Out of thirty-five magazines, only four had a rating of zero, sixteen were in the favorable range, and fifteen were negative. The trend line stayed close to neutral because the positive and negative articles consistently canceled each other out.

Table 1 also shows which magazines were favorable or unfavorable towards the Church. The least favorable magazine was *Savvy*, but only included one article. *Time* and *Newsweek* had the most articles about the Church, but both had negative ratings. *Time* and *Newsweek* were the only two magazines that wrote about the Church frequently. *Prevention* and *Conservative Digest* were the most favorable magazines, but each only included one article. *Sports Illustrated*, *The Economist*, and *People Weekly* all included multiple articles about the Church, and all had favorable ratings.
Table 1

Articles and Ratings by Magazine

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86
Figures 3-12 reviews each theme used in this study showing which themes were of most interest to the media. Each review includes a brief description of the theme as well as its treatment in magazines.

*Cultural.* This theme includes such topics as education and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. During this period, Brigham Young University received a lot of media attention, the Church built the Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center, and the released-time Seminary program was mentioned. The most favorable year was 1988, but only included one article, which spoke very highly about the number of foreign language speaking returned missionaries who attended Brigham Young University. The most negative year was 1983, but, again, only included one article. It came from *Rolling Stone* and explained that Brigham Young University had a very strict honor code, and did not seem to allow for any intellectual freedom. Overall, the cultural theme was very positive, second only in positive rating to the socio-economic theme. The results of the ratings are shown in Figure 3.

*Hierarchy.* This theme received the most negative press, with only one year receiving a positive rating. Included in this theme was the perceived control of the Church leadership in politics, business, and people. With the passing of Church President Spencer W. Kimball, articles addressed the belief that Church leaders were the only ones entitled to receive revelation for the entire Church, but they presented Church leaders as dictators with absolute authority. Other negative ratings came from articles that spoke about how women did not have the rights of the priesthood. A few articles showed how the state of Utah was affected by Church influence. The one positive year included
information about how organized the Church was and that the leaders showed great foresight and practicality in establishing and maintaining the welfare program. One article invited government leaders to follow Church leaders in a national welfare program.

*Origins.* As shown in figure 5, Church origins was a frequent theme throughout this period. This theme included information about the Church's founding, the Latter-day Saint exodus to Salt Lake Valley, and other significant historical events. The most favorable year was 1984 and had one article about the courageous march of the Mormon Battalion as well as a positive review of Joseph Smith and Church beginnings. The most negative year was 1990, mostly due to one article that was very skeptical about Joseph Smith's claims of heavenly messengers and the origins of the Book of Mormon.

*People.* Generally, Latter-day Saints were seen in two ways, either being service oriented, community centered and clean, or gullible, greedy and submissive. The negative portrayal came mostly from the tendency for members to be involved in scandals or from the stereotypical view of Latter-day Saint women. Positive images were helped by the characterization of missionaries, students at Brigham Young University, and the Saints' natural inclination to be involved in charitable activities. These trends are shown in Figure 6.

*Polygamy.* This was surprisingly a very neutral theme, with eleven of the eighteen references receiving a rating of zero. As shown in Figure 7, 1986 was the most negative year. Articles in that year highlighted some abuses of certain members who lived in polygamous relationships while the practice was still sanctioned, or the
unfounded belief that all members who live in heaven will one day live the practice. The theme of polygamy moved in a more favorable direction for the next two years, with the most positive reference coming in an article about genealogy. Because of the practice, Latter-day Saints had large families from a relatively small population, which made them ideal for scientific research.

Programs. There were numerous references to Church programs, including missionary and welfare activities, as well as the emphasis on family. Most of the negative references in 1986 were about the Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center. Some in Jerusalem perceived the Center as a location the Church would use to launch missionary efforts in the Near East. Church leaders assured officials that the building had a different purpose. Welfare and humanitarian aid were portrayed very positively, and helped a positive trend improve over the next two years. An unfavorable year was 1990, but it only included one article. The article was entitled “Fun With Missionaries,” in which the author of the article explained various ways of turning Latter-day Saint missionaries from the door.

Race. This was the theme that received the least attention in magazines, with only sixteen references during this period. As shown in Figure 9, race followed a neutral trend. Most articles simply made mention that the denial of priesthood to blacks was discontinued in 1978. That revelation was hailed as a landmark announcement, providing an opportunity for growth in third world countries. More negative press came as articles pointed out that in spite of the revelation, some continued to perceive members as racist, and that Brigham Young University still admitted very few black students. Still other
writers questioned the validity of the revelation, seeing the announcement more as a political maneuver than a divine mandate from God.

**Rites.** Rites included information about temples, temple ordinances, genealogy and healthy living. This was one of the more popular themes during the time period, and received a very positive rating. This was the only theme that did not rate below the neutral line in any year. The health practice known as the Word of Wisdom received favorable reviews throughout the period. Genealogy was always written about in a favorable or very favorable manner. The Church did announce and build many temples during the decade. Some individuals who were opposed to the Church protested vehemently. Some also viewed temple rites as one more way in which the Latter-day Saint men controlled the women, because, as one author stated, of the “pledge of wifely obedience demanded of women” in the temples.¹ These results are shown in Figure 10.

**Socio-Economic.** As shown in Figure 11, this theme, relating to business and Church finance and its members, received some of the fewest references, but had the highest average rating. Articles highlighted some of the businesses owned by the Church, as well as how the Church used its abundant resources worldwide. The decrease in 1987 came from two negative articles. Both articles essentially claimed that the Church used its money and status to coerce individuals. The article written in 1988 showed just the opposite trend, noting how fiscally responsible and beneficial the welfare program was to thousands of people.

**Theology.** The most oft-treated theme during the time period was theology, which included information about what members believed. Figure 12 shows that this was also one of the most negative themes, which was harmful to the Church’s image. Articles

¹ "Women’s Rites,” 67.
mentioned large Latter-day Saint families and often attributed the size of the families to Church beliefs in a pre-mortal existence. Authors inferred that Church members believed in a backlog of spirits that needed to be brought to earth. Some articles then coupled the idea with a falsity that members were encouraged to have really big families to save children from being born into Gentile families. The belief was inaccurate, but reflective of magazine’s portrayal of theology.
Figure 9
References and Ratings of Race

Figure 10
References and Ratings of Rites
Comparison to the First Three Studies

As shown in Table 2, the study done by Richard Cowan from 1851 to 1950 had the Church’s image at an unfavorable rating of −0.47. Along with a very negative perception of origins, polygamy was the most significant reason for the low rating. Cowan’s specific study of the decade from 1951-1961 showed a dramatic increase in favorable ratings, receiving a rating of 0.55. Once again, origins and polygamy were the most negative themes. In the study covering 1851-1950, only three themes received a positive rating, but in the analysis of the 1951-1961 study seven themes were positive.²

Dale Pelo continued the study between 1961 and 1970. The Church’s image declined during that time period, but still retained a favorable rating of 0.12. Pelo attributed the slide in popularity to the theme of race, which received the least favorable rating. Race was a topic that was not discussed in connection with the Church prior to 1962, when Latter-day Saint George Romney moved into the political spotlight.

The image of the Church continued to decline from 1970 to 1981, with a weighted average of −0.12. Adam Nielson’s study attributed the decline to the bitter treatment of the theme of hierarchy, with the perception that Church leaders exerted too much control in both religious and political arenas. With the revelation that extended the rights of the priesthood to all worthy men, the theme of race received a more favorable rating. Church involvement in opposing the Equal Rights Amendment at the end of the decade caused a lot of negative criticism of the Church.

This current study showed that the Church’s image moved just slightly more toward neutral, with a rating of −0.05. As in Nielson’s study, hierarchy was the theme that received the most criticism in national magazines. Instead of authors painting

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² Cowan, “Mormonism in National Periodicals,” 208.
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Table 3

Image By Theme—Present Study

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Figure 13

Public Image According to Periodicals Over the Years

![Graph showing public image over the years from 1851 to 1990](image)
Church leaders as racist, however, perceived oppression of women was at the heart of the negative press. Of the ten themes, six received a positive rating during this period.

Figure 13 shows the public image of the Church from Cowan’s study through the present study. Although the Church has enjoyed a positive image in national magazines during a few decades, most decades show the Church being perceived in an unfavorable manner. The trend line does indicate that the Church’s image could possibly return to a favorable view in future years.

Figures 14-18 indicate the relative emphasis given to each theme during each study. As shown in Figure 14, polygamy and hierarchy received the most interest during the first Cowan study. Polygamy and programs were the most emphasized during Cowan’s second study, as illustrated in Figure 15. The dramatic increase of publicity on Church programs helped significantly in improving the Church’s image. A theme that continued to receive national attention was individuals spotlighted. Figure 16 indicates that during 1961-1970 almost half of all references to the Church were about people. This was due mainly to the influence of two men, George Romney a politician and presidential hopeful, and Billy Casper, a famous golfer who became a Church member. Nielson’s study showed that national magazines were fairly balanced on the themes. Figure 17 does show that hierarchy and theology had slightly more media coverage. Nielson attributed that to misunderstandings about the doctrine that denied the priesthood to blacks, as well as the Church’s very public stand against the Equal Rights Amendment. Between 1982 and 1990, magazines were fairly balanced in portrayal of themes. Figure 18 shows that theology was the most popular theme, as magazines tried to explain
Figure 14
Relative Emphasis Given by National Periodicals to Themes: 1851-1950

Socio-Economic: 7%
Hierarchy: 23%
Polygamy: 26%
People: 14%
Programs: 0%
Origins: 9%
Theology: 7%
Rites: 4%
Cultural: 10%

Figure 15
Relative Emphasis Given by National Periodicals to Themes: 1951-1961

Socio-Economic: 6%
Hierarchy: 12%
Polygamy: 18%
People: 21%
Programs: 15%
Origins: 3%
Theology: 4%
Cultural: 15%
Rites: 6%
Figure 16
Relative Emphasis Given by National Periodicals to Themes: 1961-1970

Figure 17
Church doctrines that contributed to large Latter-day Saint families, and the reasons why Church leaders encouraged mothers to stay out of the work force.

Finally, Table 4 and Figure 19 compare each study based on how favorable or unfavorable the Church was portrayed during each study. The percentage was calculated by counting the number of times the articles gave attention to each theme, and then dividing it by the total number. Cowan concluded that the decline in “anti-Mormon” writing indicated a more “serious evaluation” of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Nielson added that the trend also indicated that magazine writers were, at least in part, “trying to be fair in describing the Church.” The present study reveals that although a few magazines are either “anti-Mormon” or “pro-Mormon,” the majority portray the Church from a neutral standpoint.

This and the previous studies have looked at 140 years of the Church’s image in national periodicals. Generally, misunderstandings over doctrines and practices have been the themes that have received the most negative criticism. This occurred with polygamy in the Cowan studies, and with race in the studies done by Pelo and Nielson. In this study, the perceived oppression of Latter-day Saint women caused the negative publicity. Also misunderstood was Church hierarchy, and the role leaders had in influencing politics or personal lifestyles. Generally, Church programs, like genealogy and welfare, and people received positive attention in magazines. They helped to eliminate much of the bias and misinterpretation.

This and previous studies can be beneficial to Church members. As shown, one individual can affect the Church’s overall image. One example was Mark Hofmann, whose forgeries cast doubt on Church origins. Magazines also focus on small groups
Figure 18
Relative Emphasis Given by National Periodicals to Themes: 1982-1990

Table 4
Rating Trend Percentages from 1851-1990

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<th>Years</th>
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<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Favorable</th>
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Rating Trend Percentages from 1951-1990

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</tbody>
</table>
of Latter-day Saints, like missionaries, genealogists, athletes, or those who assist with humanitarian aid. Based on the works of these individuals or groups, magazines either portray the Church in a negative or positive manner.

The most positive information about the Church comes from programs and practices, which have been consistently encouraged by Church leaders. Church members can help improve the overall image by being actively involved in those programs and practices. As members are better able to live lives full of goodness, the Church will be seen in a more favorable way.
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