

85–110) was thorough and showed very clearly the importance of considering science in helping to shape our religious ideas about the Earth. A more pressing scientific/religious issue than whether a flood occurred thousands of years ago, however, is whether our actions today are threatening not only the lives of untold numbers of other species but also the lives of our children and grandchildren, through countless acts of destruction of our environment and the growing problem of global warming.

I've heard Latter-day Saints who admit that the environment is, in fact, in danger say things like, "Well, it's the last days. The scriptures say things will get bad at the end. It's just a fulfillment of prophecy. There's nothing I can do about it." The scriptures also say there will be lots of sin and wickedness in the last days. Does that mean we should be adding to the sin personally because it's prophesied to be rampant? That we should just give in and contribute wholly to the evil of the last days, because "it's in the scriptures"? If these are indeed the last days, don't we want to be doing the right thing and be prepared when Christ returns?

We are told that it is okay to work on the Sabbath only if we are pulling our ox "out of the mire," but that's assuming we didn't spend the entire previous day pushing the ox into the mire in the first place. In the same way, we can't keep indiscriminately destroying our planet, saying, "Well, God will take care of it all during the Millennium." We are flippantly pushing off our responsibility on God.

People who shrug off serious threats

to the environment repeatedly say it costs too much to make the changes conservation groups want. Are we actually willing to sin, though, as long as we can save money? Isn't that selling our souls in a very real sense? That makes saving the environment quite clearly a religious problem for me.

Too many people see this as a political issue rather than as the moral and pragmatic danger that it really is. Millions and millions of people will be affected by flooding, drought, famine, and disease caused by climate change. To shrug off their misery and suffering is a sin, when we are completely capable of relieving a great deal of it. We need to accept both the overwhelming scientific evidence of global warming and our religious obligation of stewardship of the planet. We need to use these gifts to help us stand up for the environment as devout Latter-day Saints, making this planet a place where all of God's creatures have a right to live.

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#### *Reply to Schow's Reply*

I must say that I've never read a piece of more convoluted reasoning than H. Wayne Schow's advocacy for homosexual marriage ("The Case for Same-Sex Marriage: Reply to Randolph Muhlestein," 40, no. 3 [Fall 2007]: 40–68). Despite his contention that we should not take biblical statements about homosexuality at face value and that our Church leaders must be somehow unenlightened, homosexual *behavior* is a sin. Period.

From the beginning, God has declared that sexual relations of any kind between two men or two women constitute sin, just as adultery is sin. These sorts of commandments do not change just because social or cultural contexts shift over time. But what would be the result if the Church began sanctioning homosexual marriage? The answer is that homosexual behavior, between two married men or women, would no longer be considered a sin. And if homosexual acts within the bonds of such a “marriage” were not sinful, then practicing homosexuals would be eligible to enter the temple, and the Church would have no grounds for refusing to seal them to each other. But who are we to take it upon ourselves to play God, or to change his commandments at our own whim? This is the crux of the homosexual marriage issue, and the consequences are more far-reaching than Schow would have us believe.

The crucial question everybody seems to belabor is whether homosexual orientation is biologically based or strictly cultural. It may surprise most Latter-day Saints, but LDS doctrine insists that homosexuality is, at least in its incipient stage, biological. The scriptures teach that we are “fallen man” (D&C 20:20), that because of the Fall “all mankind” is “carnal, sensual, and devilish” (Mosiah 16:3). Our spirits were not perfect in our first estate, but they came to this earth pure and innocent (D&C 93:38). But our mortal bodies are of this fallen earth, carnal and sensual, until we tame the flesh so that it obeys the spirit.

Many people assume that if something is “natural”—even biological—we

must pursue it and embrace it. But our task in mortality is just the opposite. We are to put off the natural man and become saints through the atonement of Christ (Mosiah 3:19); we are to resist our natural tendencies and proclivities. Dr. M. Scott Peck put it nicely: “Just because a desire or behavior is natural does not mean it is essential or beneficial or unchangeable. . . . It is also natural . . . to never brush our teeth. Yet we teach ourselves to do the unnatural until the unnatural becomes itself second nature. Indeed, all self-discipline might be defined as teaching ourselves to do the unnatural.”<sup>1</sup>

Now, I am not homosexual, so I do not completely comprehend the specific trial these individuals endure, but I was born with my own set of natural proclivities, many of which are ungodly and are tremendously difficult to overcome. But I don’t attempt to have these tendencies reclassified so that I can sin with impunity. Just because I might feel an attraction for my neighbor’s wife doesn’t mean I should ask the Church to make adultery an acceptable “alternative” lifestyle. I certainly don’t make the ridiculous claim that the Church is not pursuing the “path of inclusivity in the spirit of Christ’s gospel teaching” (Schow, 62) if it does not welcome adulterers into its ranks. The same argument, of course, could be made for pedophiles, serial rapists, pathological liars, greedy capitalists, drug addicts, or kleptomaniacs. So, why is it that homosexuals want to be special, to be treated differently from those who struggle with other but categorically similar thorns

in the flesh? Why is it that they (and this is one of Schow's primary arguments) believe they are entitled to happiness while living in sin? This, as Alma explained, is contrary to the nature of happiness (Alma 41:10-11).

I have compassion for individuals who struggle with homosexual tendencies. And I know that Schow is distraught over his son's death from AIDS. But his wish that gay marriage had been available in "Mormon country" so that his son wouldn't have gone off to California and contracted his fatal disease is simply wrong-headed. There is no guarantee that the availability of homosexual marriage would have prevented either the promiscuity or the infection. If, on the other hand, his son had recognized his sexual attraction for what it was—a natural inclination that needed to be resisted and perhaps even overcome—he certainly would not have died from AIDS.

What concerns me most is that homosexual tendencies are affected by cultural influences. The biological factor is not the only element in the equation. What this means, ultimately, is that, as homosexuality becomes more accepted and prevalent in society, more children who perhaps have a slight homosexual tendency will feel the cultural tug, will experience a curiosity, will explore these rather benign feelings, and will expand them beyond all reason. For, contrary to the propaganda, homosexuality is not binary, not simply an on or off switch. Rather, it is a spectrum of desire ranging from very intense to rather mild. Consequently, in such a society as we are "tolerating" into existence, individuals who fifty years ago

never would have given a second thought to a stray homosexual urge will now become entrapped by the propaganda and "discover" an identity that is largely a cultural construct. In this context, Elder Neal A. Maxwell was right: "When some things come out of the closet, they bring the darkness with them."<sup>2</sup>

Contrary to what the homosexual community wants us to believe, it is indeed possible to overcome homosexual tendencies. Most interesting is the conversion of a major activist in the homosexual revolution. Michael Glatze, founding editor of *Young Gay America*, recounts his story in "How a 'Gay Rights' Leader Became Straight." After sixteen years, Glatze began questioning his life and influence. When he turned to God for answers, "It became clear to me, as I . . . really prayed about it—that homosexuality prevents us from finding our true self within. . . . We believe, under the influence of homosexuality, that lust is not just acceptable, but a virtue. But there is no homosexual 'desire' that is apart from lust."<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, the homosexual community and its supporters, like Schow, simply refuse to acknowledge that this perspective has any validity. But Glatze's conclusions are both sobering and persuasive: "I know that homosexuality is lust and pornography wrapped into one. I'll never let anybody try to convince me otherwise, no matter how slick their tongues or how sad their story. I have seen it. I know the truth."

## Notes

1. M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled* (New York: Touchstone, 1978), 213–14.
2. Neal A. Maxwell, *Wherefore, Ye Must Press Forward* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), 12.
3. Michael Glatze, “How a ‘Gay Rights’ Leader Became Straight,” *WorldNetDaily*, July 3, 2007, [http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=56487](http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=56487) (accessed December 1, 2007).

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*A Reasoned Discussion*

Until this last issue of *Dialogue*, I feel justified in saying that the gay marriage “debate” has not been a debate at all. Those in favor of legalizing same-sex marriage have offered reasoned and impassioned *arguments* in support of same-sex marriage, while opponents of same-sex marriage have offered only the vehemently expressed *assertion* that gay marriage would undermine or even destroy traditional marriage. When pressed on exactly how same-sex marriage would do that, opponents have always simply repeated the assertion—without explaining the mechanics of how same-sex marriage destroys anything, much less the marital relationships of nongays.

When I saw that *Dialogue* was actually planning to publish an article making the case against same-sex marriage, I became hopeful. Knowing *Dialogue*’s reputation, I expected to finally get what I have been longing for all these years: actual reasoned discussion of substantive issues, with the possibility of actually understanding the concerns

of gay marriage opponents. And *Dialogue* delivered. For the first time ever, I read an actual argument against same-sex marriage that explains the assertions in terms that I can understand, even if I do not agree. Thank you!

I am grateful that Randolph G. Muhlestein (“The Case Against Same-Sex Marriage,” 40, no. 3 [Fall 2007]: 1–39) was willing to go out on a limb, especially knowing what type of criticism he might open himself up to from those who disagree with his position. Discussions of this emotional topic have often not been civil, so it takes courage to come forward and state the case. He did so both clearly and compassionately. Before reading his essay, I understood the scriptural arguments but could make neither heads nor tails of the social “death-of-marriage” argument. Thanks to his willingness to go out on a limb, I think I understand it much better now, and I thank him for it.

If I understand his core argument it boils down to the notion that legalizing same-sex marriage will cause people to become gay. Muhlestein did not overstate the case. Even while acknowledging that the data are difficult to analyze and that this thesis could be wrong, I read the emotional heart of his argument as caution: Gay marriage might not cause any more damage to the already beleaguered institution of heterosexual marriage, but don’t go tinkering with a system that is already in distress when you don’t know what effect the tinkering will have. To me this position suggests openness on his part to the possibility of same-sex mar-