

“As Our Two Faiths
Have Worked Together”—
Catholicism and Mormonism
on Human Life Ethics and
Same-Sex Marriage

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Past joint efforts of the Mormon Church and the Catholic Church in the United States against the legalization of same-sex marriage have reinforced the impression that the Mormon and Catholic positions on marriage and human life ethics parallel each other. This article argues that the divide between the two churches on these issues is much wider than generally thought. I start by sketching two conditions under which Mormon and Catholic realms operate, namely, in the defining of doctrine and policy, and in leadership approach. It is a rough and short rendering of some characteristics and I acknowledge its incompleteness, but it helps explain the background for the divide. Next I compare respective positions on human life ethics. These pertain to the relation between sex and procreation, and to abortion, embryonic stem cell research, and euthanasia. In all of this, I consider only the official institutional positions, not the way individual Catholics and Mormons interpret and live these positions. The comparison shows that, on these issues, present-day Mormonism is more careful and compassionate than Catholicism, and more trusting of individual conscience. The Mormon approach, however, provides grounds for Catholics to denounce the Mormon Church as unreliable and even pernicious. These considerations lead to reflections on the

implications for same-sex marriage. I analyze a number of factors that could ease the way for the Mormon Church to withdraw its opposition to same-sex marriage, at least as it concerns civil society, while the Catholic Church is unlikely to budge. At the same time I realize the transience of some of my comments on such a current and constantly evolving topic.

Differences in Defining Doctrine and Policy

The Catholic and Mormon processes that define doctrine and major policies are broadly different. Catholic dogmas, viewed as transmitted from the scriptures or by tradition, are by definition immutable. Though their historical genesis is complex,² the present perception of the sanctity of their origin, as well as their exposition over many centuries, in approved “magisterial documents” such as theological treatises, conciliar decrees, pastoral letters, papal declarations, or encyclicals, make any later nuancing of these doctrines, let alone change, nearly impossible. Modifications usually require the approval of large councils, rarely held, which often also necessitate the agreement of churches and ordinaries in communion with the Apostolic See of Rome. The last council, Vatican II, now already half a century ago, took three years (1962–65).³ The process also requires long editing by the various participants to come to the final texts. After Vatican II, it took twenty years to issue the revised code of Roman Catholic Canon Law. Such intricate and protracted procedures, unlikely to be soon repeated, add to stagnation. Thus, the Catholic leadership derives its ethical viewpoints from what it claims to be unalterable religious premises and defends them with remarkable drive and detail, using its political power openly and vigorously in many countries.⁴ This is not to say that no substantial changes in teaching and practice occur in Catholicism, but they are usually framed as “developments” for which the legitimizing requires subtle theological reconstructions, rephrasings, or quiet oblivion to save the semblance of continuity. Examples of past doctrines that were altered include usury (e.g., taking a profit on a loan), which in the Middle Ages was condemned by three ecumenical councils as a mortal sin; slavery, which since patristic times until the middle of the nineteenth century was upheld by popes and theologians on scriptural and moral grounds; and denial of reli-

gious freedom, which for centuries allowed the Catholic Church to persecute heretics. That last doctrine, which for 1,200 years had been fiercely upheld, was dismissed in 1965 as “a way of acting that was hardly in accord with the spirit of the Gospel” and imputed to “the vicissitudes of history” as Pope Paul VI noted in *Dignitatis Humanae*.⁵ These changes in Catholic doctrines and policies generated many internal and external studies.⁶

The Mormon decision-making process on doctrines and on policies is quite different. Mormonism, a relatively young religion, budded within a realm of tremendous freedom of religious expression and doctrinal development. It did not grow in the rich intellectual soil that delivered the theological summum of Catholicism. Apart from core tenets as contained in the standard works, various unofficial Mormon doctrines and speculations have fluctuated through church history, but were often considered official in their period. Moreover, Mormonism claims that continuing revelation can justify additions, changes, and adaptations. History confirms it. Momentous changes can come abruptly, such as with withdrawing permission to perform new plural marriages in 1890 or lifting the racial priesthood ban in 1978. Note, however, that with time such changes tend to be explained as less groundbreaking than they were at the moment of their announcement; hence here, as in Catholicism, judicious rhetoric polishes the past. For example, the Mormon Church tries to minimize the polygamous episode and would rather it be forgotten. It reshapes the priesthood ban from a doctrine into a flawed policy of unclear origin. Still, even reduced in perception, these radical modifications are of an abruptness unknown in Catholicism. Other changes occur less conspicuously, prompted by circumstances of the period and determined by the personalities of General Authorities. Policies shift on the waves of assimilation or retrenchment in response to the surrounding culture, as Armand Mauss has analyzed.⁷ Moreover, (strong) personal opinions of Mormon leaders sometimes dictate unofficial policies, but are not sanctioned as “revelation.” Then they quietly dwindle with the changing of the guard. Compared to the extensive Catholic texts, which take time to mature and require institutional vetting processes, most Mormon policy decisions, made by a small group at the top, occur rel-

actively swiftly and are announced succinctly. It is noteworthy that since the 1970s, correlation tends to limit Mormon doctrinal material to (often prosaic) essentials and discourages excursions outside the approved curriculum. The Church's *Handbook (of Instructions)*, judged against Catholic canon law and its related magisterial documents, is a model of simplicity and practicality and is regularly updated. Finally, more recently, Mormon leaders have seen wisdom in trusting various ethical decisions to the individual conscience of each member rather than providing guidelines prone to change over time. Such is the case with the ethical topics I will discuss.

These two different views on the definition of doctrine and policies are related to differences in leadership approach.

Differences in Leadership Approach

The members of the highest leadership in Catholicism and Mormonism are, in many ways, poles apart as to their backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences.

The Catholic Church is led by celibate clergymen whose adult lives have been exclusively spent in the ecclesiastical system. Their long academic preparation is essentially in theology, philosophy, Canon Law, exegesis, Latin, and education. These realms mold their language and their thinking. They seldom have professional background or experience in fields such as business, law, medicine, or science. Once in their priesthood track, they narrow their intimate familial and social networks, both by their priestly position and by celibacy. Their movement toward the top through the various episcopal ranks is a slow and complex semi-democratic process involving many individuals and councils, negotiations, agreements, and controls. As they rise in the hierarchy of prelates with its appropriate obligations and status vestments, they partake of the ambiance of centuries of power and ritual. In most cases, their rising position is also regionally or nationally bound as they represent their native area. Moreover, it is an error to think the Catholic structure is monolithic in type and in obedience. In certain countries the national conference of bishops is not always in full accord with the Holy See, which may lead to powerful clerical groups with their own Catholic identity, sometimes reinforced by peculiar state-church relations such as in Po-

land or in some Latin American countries.⁸ At the same time, some prelates, virtually untouchable, may voice personal, more liberal opinions, which are then rebuffed by other, conservative prelates. Sometimes these differences play out in the media and are part of strategies of probing reactions and defining boundaries. It explains why it is always possible to find unorthodox viewpoints which are presented as “new directions” in Catholicism but which do not represent the Vatican’s position. Indeed, the conservative prelates on their way to the top engage in the never-ending struggle to “defend the faith” against attacks from the outside and against many internal centrifugal forces. The end result is guarding permanence and stability in doctrine and organization, whatever the world or many of their own faithful think. Also, as part of a tradition of centuries of international power, Catholic prelates assume the authority to speak out boldly on various public matters, such as war and peace, human rights, world poverty, the environment, the death penalty, or arms trade. Note how they can combine a social and progressive agenda with unbendable conservatism on other issues.

The Mormon highest leadership is composed of men with varied educational and professional backgrounds and, for most of them, extensive experience in their previous, non-religious careers, often related to management. None has studied for the ministry in the Catholic sense. None is a theologian or a philosopher. Their language is simple and practical. They have served in ever-changing church positions without a set hierarchical pattern. A long record of obedience and compliance is a prerequisite for callings to higher positions which come unexpectedly and undemocratically. Once at the highest level of apostleship, usually after age fifty, they serve for the rest of their lives. Each of them is married with children and grandchildren. Some are widowers who have remarried. Their broad social network resembles that of any man heavily engaged in society and church. Having been close to the rank and file and knowing from personal experience the challenges of marriage and parenthood, they remain, in general, sensitive to the incidents and feelings in families and wards. For most of them, these factors make their outlook more amenable to daily, external influences, peculiar cases, and to matter-

of-fact considerations, including momentary attention to items that seem trivial to outsiders, such as admonitions about tattoos or earrings. For many, if not most of them, a fair measure of flexibility permeates their work. Differences of opinion among them are vigilantly kept inside. Their concern for improving the Mormon image in the world against the lingering repute of weirdness makes public relations a main driving force in decisions. At the same time, their practicality and their weariness of public controversies, including among the Mormon faithful themselves, make them cautious, if not silent, on most of the loaded socio-political matters where the Catholic leadership dares to speak out.

Of course, there are also similarities between Catholic and Mormon leadership at the highest level. These are all older men, appointed for life, some in declining health. They have an overall conservative outlook and a nostalgic attachment to the past, typified by their love either for Latin or for the English of the King James Bible. No doubt seniority and strong personalities weigh likewise in the upper layers of both churches. For their respective flocks, the pope and the prophet embody supreme authority. For the past half century, the leadership in both churches has followed similar paths in their reactions to major developments. In the sixties they responded to the challenges of changed times and circumstances by a laborious overhaul—respectively, Vatican II and correlation.⁹ In the last decades of the twentieth century, they reacted similarly to prominent inside critical voices, who were labeled dissenters and publicly treated as such—respectively, Catholic theologians such as Hans Küng or Edward Schillebeeckx and Mormons such as the September Six. More recently, the leadership from both churches has chosen to adopt a policy of more tolerance or at least of ignoring internal critics, mostly, it seems, in view of the negative publicity such controversies now easily elicit through the social media.

This brief comparison in the defining of doctrine and policy, and in leadership approach, should help in understanding the respective postures of both churches on the issues discussed in the following sections.

Sex and Procreation

A central question in the position of each church is to what ex-

tent sexual intercourse is intrinsically meant for reproduction. Catholicism uses the terms “unitive” and “procreative” to distinguish between two functions of the sexual act but insists that the unitive function is inseparable from the procreative one, even if the latter does not lead to pregnancy. Pope Paul VI’s landmark 1968 encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, affirms the “inseparable connection” between the two functions and the “intrinsic relationship to procreation” of each sexual act. A long quotation is appropriate here, also to familiarize some of my readers with Catholic parlance (in the original Latin it sounds even more transcendent):

The sexual activity, in which husband and wife are intimately and chastely united with one another, through which human life is transmitted, is, as the recent Council [Vatican II] recalled, “noble and worthy.” It does not, moreover, cease to be legitimate even when, for reasons independent of their will, it is foreseen to be infertile. For its natural adaptation to the expression and strengthening of the union of husband and wife is not thereby suppressed. The fact is, as experience shows, that new life is not the result of each and every act of sexual intercourse. God has wisely ordered laws of nature and the incidence of fertility in such a way that successive births are already naturally spaced through the inherent operation of these laws. The Church, nevertheless, in urging men to the observance of the precepts of the natural law, which it interprets by its constant doctrine, teaches that each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life.

This particular doctrine, often expounded by the magisterium of the Church, is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act. The reason is that the fundamental nature of the marriage act, while uniting husband and wife in the closest intimacy, also renders them capable of generating new life—and this as a result of laws written into the actual nature of man and of woman. And if each of these essential qualities, the unitive and the procreative, is preserved, the use of marriage fully retains its sense of true mutual love and its ordination to the supreme responsibility of parenthood to which man is called.¹⁰

The literature which expounds the history and dimension of this Catholic doctrine is extensive and useful to understand the deep theological tenets that make the Vatican unbendable on all related issues, including same-sex marriage.¹¹

At first sight, present-day Mormonism, if one starts with the

The Family: A Proclamation to the World, adopts a similar stance as the Catholic Church, though expressed in much simpler and more direct terms:

The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

However, as to sexual expression within marriage, the Mormon Church does not seem to take the absolute Catholic stand. The relation between the procreative and unitive functions is expressed as "not only, but also" without the rhetoric of "inseparable connection" or "intrinsic relationship to procreation" of each sexual act. Under the already telling heading "Birth control," the Mormon *Handbook 2* states:

Married couples should also understand that sexual relations within marriage are divinely approved not only for the purpose of procreation, but also as a way of expressing love and strengthening emotional and spiritual bonds between husband and wife.¹²

This juxtaposition could still be interpreted as confirming an inseparable connection, but the preceding sentences in the *Handbook* significantly weaken such an interpretation:

It is the privilege of married couples who are able to bear children to provide mortal bodies for the spirit children of God, whom they are then responsible to nurture and rear. The decision as to how many children to have and when to have them is extremely intimate and private and should be left between the couple and the Lord. Church members should not judge one another in this matter.¹³

In other words, the prayer-based, justified personal decision of a couple to put the procreative function on hold allows one to view the unitive function separately, as a way "to express love and to strengthen emotional and spiritual bonds." The separation of the functions is explicit in the Church's publication *True to the Faith*:

While one purpose of these relations is to provide physical bodies for God's children, another purpose is to express love for one an-

other—to bind husband and wife together in loyalty, fidelity, consideration, and common purpose.¹⁴

The difference between unitive and procreative functions leads to the question of the use of contraception. Mormons understand the just-quoted paragraphs of the *Handbook* as not forbidding the use of contraception. This current Mormon position also illustrates the above-mentioned quiet shifts in unofficial policies. Indeed, while some Church leaders up to the 1970s unequivocally condemned birth control, the rhetoric changed with the culture, in particular when it appeared that, during the 1960s, the vast majority of the membership had already accepted the use of improved contraceptives.¹⁵

The Catholic standpoint is explicit in its different viewpoint:

Equally to be excluded, as the teaching authority of the Church has frequently declared, is direct sterilization, whether perpetual or temporary, whether of the man or of the woman. Similarly excluded is every action which, either in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible.¹⁶

Catholic Answers explicates: “This includes sterilization, condoms and other barrier methods, spermicides, coitus interruptus (withdrawal method), the Pill, and all other such methods.”¹⁷ This Catholic policy remains unchanged, in spite of widespread “disobedience” among the faithful, vocal internal opposition, and severe controversies over the Catholic “responsibility” in spreading HIV by not permitting the use of condoms, even in the case of married HIV-discordant couples.¹⁸

Some will argue that the Catholic Church allows periodic abstinence, “the rhythm method,” as a natural form of birth control. Indeed:

If therefore there are well-grounded reasons for spacing births, arising from the physical or psychological condition of husband or wife, or from external circumstances, the Church teaches that married people may then take advantage of the natural cycles immanent in the reproductive system and engage in marital intercourse only during those times that are infertile, thus controlling birth in a way which does not in the least offend the moral principles which we have just explained.¹⁹

Various Catholic organizations and institutions have therefore been working in favor of “Responsible Parenthood” or “Natural Family Planning,” helping couples understand and apply the principles of periodic abstinence. Apart from the restrictions that such an approach puts on the enjoyment of sexual relations, and apart from the higher chances of unwanted pregnancy, the strict Catholic interpretation of responsible parenthood does not even include the permission for fertile married couples to use it to postpone a first pregnancy, as it only applies to “additional children”:

With regard to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, responsible parenthood is exercised by those who prudently and generously decide to have more children, and by those who, for serious reasons and with due respect to moral precepts, decide not to have additional children for either a certain or an indefinite period of time.²⁰

So, all in all, the differences between the Mormon and Catholic positions on birth control are significant. While the Catholic position keeps insisting that contraception is “intrinsically evil,”²¹ in Mormonism it became quietly allowed over time. This disparity explains why the Mormon Church did not join in the Catholic rejection of the birth control insurance coverage as part of President Obama’s health care overhaul.

However, it would be wrong to interpret the Mormon position as a sign that the Church has lessened its emphasis on fertility. Children remain an eminent part of the Mormon view on marriage, but the Mormon leadership has adopted a position that valorizes personal conscience and separates, or at least loosens, the relation between the function of procreation and the function of sexual enjoyment within marriage. Could that unbinding open the way to a more tolerant view on same-sex marriage, at least in civil life? I will come back to this point in the section titled “Same-Sex Marriage.”

Abortion, Embryonic Stem Cell Research, and Euthanasia

Catholics and Mormons are often said to be on common ground on other ethical issues dealing with human life—abortion, embryonic stem cell research, and euthanasia. When looked at closely, this commonality is quite relative. The topic is of interest

in the broader perspective of different attitudes which may, ultimately, also have a bearing on the positions on same-sex marriage because the Mormon Church now tends to choose the path of reasonableness and compassion.

Both the Catholic Church and the Mormon Church condemn abortion in no uncertain terms. But a main difference rests, again, in Catholic inalterable absolutism versus Mormon nuancing due to humane considerations. Although, since its earliest history, the Catholic Church upheld differences in gravity according to stages of pregnancy, the present canon law makes no such distinction: any destruction of an embryo from the moment of conception is abortion and the person responsible incurs excommunication, as stated in a one-line rule: “A person who procures a completed abortion incurs a *latae sententiae* [automatic] excommunication.”²² Such an automatic excommunication, incurred at the moment of committing the offense, means the person is excluded from the sacraments and from taking an active part in the liturgy. Thus no exceptions are made for pregnancies resulting from rape or for medical conditions endangering the mother’s life. This categorical condemnation imposed by the Catholic Church on any abortion can draw worldwide attention in high-profile cases, such as the 2009 excommunication of the mother and the doctors involved in the abortion for a nine-year-old girl who had been raped by her stepfather and whose life was judged at risk.²³

The Mormon position, though confirming that abortion “is a most serious matter,” limits its denunciation to “elective abortion for personal or social convenience” and is open to exceptions:

The Church opposes elective abortion for personal or social convenience. Members must not submit to, perform, arrange for, pay for, consent to, or encourage an abortion. The only possible exceptions are when: 1. Pregnancy resulted from forcible rape or incest. 2. A competent physician determines that the life or health of the mother is in serious jeopardy. 3. A competent physician determines that the fetus has severe defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth.²⁴

Conversely, and also typical of a main difference between Catholicism and Mormonism, are the disciplinary consequences for those involved in an abortion. The Mormon Church points to the

eventuality of Church discipline—a painful process, involving a group of people, and implying a time frame—with a conditional remark as to forgiveness:

Church members who submit to, perform, arrange for, pay for, consent to, or encourage an abortion may be subject to Church discipline. As far as has been revealed, a person may repent and be forgiven for the sin of abortion.²⁵

In Catholicism, though abortion implies automatic excommunication (which is seldom formally articulated but can be public in high-profile cases), forgiveness (and automatic reinstatement) is usually soon accessible. *Catholic Answers* makes it almost sound trivial or mechanical: “Fortunately, abortion, like all sins, is forgivable; and forgiveness is as close as the nearest confessional.”²⁶ Moreover, in contrast to the Mormon realm, the confessional is anonymous and, provided there is due contrition, absolution is normally obtained at once.

The second issue in human life ethics concerns embryonic stem cell research. As was to be expected, the Catholic Church took an immediate stand against ESCR, in line with its condemnation of in vitro fertilization as this procedure discards embryonic cells.²⁷ Since then the Vatican has, in response to almost each new development in ESCR, strongly reacted against what it considers the manipulation and destruction of human life.²⁸ The Catholic position has been reiterated by Pope Benedict XVI and is expected to be followed by Pope Francis.²⁹

The Mormon Church, in contrast, took a neutral position on ESCR. The original Church news release in 2001, when the discussion was vivid on the American political front, mentioned:

Because of increasing interest from members of the news media regarding the Church’s position on “Stem Cell Research,” the following statement is provided: While the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have not taken a position at this time on the newly emerging field of stem cell research, it merits cautious scrutiny. The proclaimed potential to provide cures or treatments for many serious diseases needs careful and continuing study by conscientious, qualified investigators. As with any emerging new technology, there are concerns that must be addressed. Scientific and religious viewpoints both demand that strict moral and ethical guidelines be followed.³⁰

The Mormon standpoint seems an example of how non-religious professional backgrounds of Church leaders, including those from the medical field, as well as awareness of the support for ESCR of five Mormon U.S. senators, may have influenced the decision-making process.³¹

Because of the difference between adult stem cell research (which the Catholic Church does not oppose) and embryonic stem cell research, more recent statements from religious groups are careful to make that distinction. Also from the Mormon Church, as stated in an undated *Newsroom* topic:

The First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has not taken a position regarding the use of embryonic stem cells for research purposes. The absence of a position should not be interpreted as support for or opposition to any other statement made by Church members, whether they are for or against embryonic stem cell research.³²

It relates to another Mormon clarification in that regard: “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has no official position on the moment that human life begins.”³³ This admission allows the concept of possible delayed “ensoulment” after fertilization. This concept has been and still is a belief shared by faithful Mormons who can visualize it distinctly based on their understanding of the sphere of premortal existence from which a spirit, in human form, comes to join the body in order to be born. The Catholic position, in contrast, is radical: human life starts with conception. It leaves no room for the “cautious scrutiny” in ESCR that could save lives.

The third issue deals with euthanasia. The principle of the sanctity of life is similar in both churches. For both it is also a similar challenge to uphold the principle in the case of an incurable disease or condition, when suffering is long and intense and dying is inevitable. Each church clearly condemns active euthanasia. For the Mormon Church, “deliberately putting to death a person” or “assisting someone to commit suicide, violates the commandments of God.”³⁴ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* posits: “Whatever its motives and means, direct euthanasia consists in putting an end to the lives of handicapped, sick, or dying persons. It is morally unacceptable.”³⁵

Even without active euthanasia, the remaining realities in palliative care are still complex. Each church gives counsel to that effect, but the sphere in each reflects different theological views. Typical for the Catholic Church is the reflective approach of the topic, in a theological framework, as worded in the long *Declaration on Euthanasia* by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1980. It states that for Catholicism, “suffering, especially suffering during the last moments of life, has a special place in God’s saving plan; it is in fact a sharing in Christ’s passion and a union with the redeeming sacrifice which He offered in obedience to the Father’s will.” It explains that some prefer “to moderate their use of painkillers, in order to accept voluntarily at least a part of their sufferings and thus associate themselves in a conscious way with the sufferings of Christ crucified.” This position is part of the Catholic notion of “the power of salvific suffering” in which each can participate: “Each one is also called to share in that suffering through which the Redemption was accomplished.”³⁶

The Mormon counsel in the paragraph “Prolonging Life” is brief. Death is placed in a perspective of hope, as the expected passage to a next phase of existence, without adding any rationalization for continuous suffering, nor detailing peculiar cases:

When severe illness strikes, members should exercise faith in the Lord and seek competent medical assistance. However, when dying becomes inevitable, it should be seen as a blessing and a purposeful part of eternal existence. Members should not feel obligated to extend mortal life by means that are unreasonable. These judgments are best made by family members after receiving wise and competent medical advice and seeking divine guidance through fasting and prayer.³⁷

The Mormon counsel recommends considering the inevitability of approaching death as a factor. Artificial prolonging of life, with added suffering, does not seem to be part of how Mormons see God’s plan for human beings. “Unreasonable” in the use of certain means to prolong life is not defined. With the advancement of medical technologies, what may have seemed unreasonable a few decades ago could now be standard practice to keep someone alive. But “unreasonable” can also be understood

as not accepting death when the normal course of life would expect it.

In concluding this discussion on human life ethics, considering the differing Catholic and Mormon positions on sex and reproduction, contraceptives, abortion, ESCR, and euthanasia, it would be tempting to say that the Catholic standpoints fit a coherent set of immutable doctrinal principles, while the Mormon leadership tends to develop policy based on pragmatic ethical judgments which adjust to the times and to social situations and are therefore less consistent. In some measure that conclusion is true as it pertains to the present, but such a view underestimates the interaction between doctrine and practice in a diachronic perspective. Indeed, in the development of a religion, practice shapes doctrine more than doctrine determines practice. Catholic doctrines such as eucharistic adoration, salvific suffering, Mary's assumption, or saints' intercession grew out of practices in devotion or folk belief. These doctrines took centuries to solidify to their present rigid form, including the notion of the absolute sanctity of life—a principle the Catholic Church adopted only after centuries of consenting to, and even urging execution for, all sorts of crimes, including heresy. A main difference between Catholicism and Mormonism is therefore their time frames. The proto-orthodox period of Christianity, up to the fourth century, during which nothing was theologically assured, was already much longer than Mormonism's whole existence up to now. Next, Catholicism took more than a millennium to come to its (almost) full definition during the Counter-Reformation. Some could conclude from that perspective that Mormonism is just starting to mature toward a more elaborate and permanent theology. But, as already noted, present-day Mormonism now tends to "correlate" its teaching to a minimum. Moreover, it claims continuing revelation as an "immutable" doctrine, which, paradoxically, makes changeability intrinsic and therefore consistent.

Catholics on Edge as Mormonism "Reinvents Itself"

How does the Catholic Church react to the Mormon positions as identified in the previous section? It is true that both the Mormon Church and the Catholic Church remain unwavering on the *principle* of respect for human life. But on the Mormon side, nu-

ances, exceptions, and the shift to personal responsibility, as described above, can enter the framework rather easily and over relatively short periods due to flexible or changing leadership, humane concerns, a succinct decision-making process, and a tradition of adaptable policies. Such instability is anathema to the Catholic Church, hence its distrust of this approach, as in this reaction in *Catholic Answers*, responding to an interview given by President Gordon B. Hinckley in 1997:

Discussing abortion, Hinckley said his church permits it in several circumstances, including for the mother's health. This is a change to a more liberal, politically correct position than what Mormonism has held to this point. When asked about euthanasia, Hinckley declared that "no, *at this point at least*, we haven't favored that" (emphasis added). Mormons may well wonder if this leaves the door cracked open to future divine permission to kill their sick and elderly. Ultimately, the past doctrinal transformations of Mormonism give no confidence that there will not be equally drastic revisions to Mormon doctrine in the future. There may be more stages yet to come as Mormonism reinvents itself to fit the culture around it.³⁸

Or this:

Mormon pro-life sentiment might perdure at the individual level, but their religious leadership has quietly altered Mormonism's abortion stance into one almost indistinguishable from that of mainstream anti-life America.³⁹

Such disparaging statements toward Mormonism may also reflect that the Catholic Church views the Mormon Church as an ally only when it meets Catholicism's defense needs. The Catholic-Mormon alliance to sustain Proposition 8 illustrates this "partnership" all too well. As far as has been reported, Mormon involvement came in response to the personal invitation of George H. Niederauer, archbishop of San Francisco at the time and former bishop of Salt Lake City, where he had established a good relation with Mormon leadership. It is difficult to deny that the Prop 8 campaign turned into a PR disaster for the Mormon Church and resulted in much internal division. Moreover, there are no indications that the massive Mormon contribution in California earned the Mormons any lasting respect from the Vatican. The situation in the American West, where institutional contact and mutual respect between Catholics and Mormons is based on

shared local history and a reciprocal critical mass of members, with relatively few converts in either direction, fails to translate to any comparable relationship in the world perspective.

Indeed, since the 1970s the Catholic Church has been losing millions of its members to new religious movements, in particular to the many forms of Pentecostalism or Evangelicalism in Latin America.⁴⁰ It is true that since Vatican II the Catholic Church has been an outspoken defender of religious freedom and rights, but that attitude must be seen in the original context of its own pressured position in Islamic and Eastern European countries and in China. Since then, things have changed. As Paul Freston mentions, “In the face of the Pentecostal challenge, a tension has emerged between the Catholic Church’s support for religious freedom and its desire to hold on to its privileged position in traditionally Catholic areas of the world.”⁴¹ Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, and Mormons erode Catholic hegemony as well. In 1992 Pope John Paul II asked the Latin American Episcopal Conference to defend the flock from “rapacious wolves,” clearly alluding to the “sects” to which millions of Catholics had converted.⁴² No Catholic parish priest, in any country, can watch acquiescently when Mormon missionaries are teaching his sheep, in particular because the teaching includes, at least implicitly, a devastating critique of Catholic claims to divine authority. On the internet, individual Catholics maintain anti-Mormon sites and blogs as their answer to Mormon proselytizing. The recent announcement that Mormon missionaries would work through social media to find potential converts will only irritate some Catholics even more.⁴³

Same-Sex Marriage

Could the preceding discussion somehow predict how the respective Mormon and Catholic positions on same-sex marriage might evolve? Both churches displayed equal determination and used similar arguments at the height of California’s Prop 8 campaign in 2008. Where has it gone from there and where could it go further?

From the viewpoint of human life ethics, it does not seem the Catholic Church can budge because of its fundamental view on the “inseparable connection” between the unitive and procre-

ative functions or the “intrinsic relationship to procreation” of each sexual act. The argument is explicitly part of its rejection of same-sex marriage since homosexual relations “close the sexual act to the gift of life.”⁴⁴ Or, as stated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2003:

Homosexual unions are totally lacking in the biological and anthropological elements of marriage and family which would be the basis, on the level of reason, for granting them legal recognition. Such unions are not able to contribute in a proper way to the procreation and survival of the human race. The possibility of using recently discovered methods of artificial reproduction, beyond involving a grave lack of respect for human dignity, does nothing to alter this inadequacy.⁴⁵

It should be noted, however, that the Catholic Church, for even longer than the Mormon Church, has been urging that “unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.”⁴⁶ Pope Francis’s recent statement as to “not judging” homosexuals for their orientation is therefore identical to previous policy. Some media presented it as signaling a change in attitude, but *Catholic Online* was quick to respond:

Some in the media chose to turn the compassionate comments of Francis into an insinuation that he somehow veered from the teaching of the Church. Of course, it is simply not true. For Catholics, one of the treasures of being a Catholic Christian is that there is a magisterium, a teaching office. Even the Pope cannot change revealed truth.⁴⁷

As discussed earlier, dogmatic rigidity and institutional stagnation dictate the reiteration of Catholic policies and statements, even if a large section of the Catholic faithful worldwide, including many parish priests and theologians, openly disagree with the official Catholic position on homosexuality and same-sex marriage. At the same time, conservative prelates and scores of dutiful Catholics refer to the inalterable magisterium, thus easily obstructing any suggestions of change in policy.

The Mormon leadership, on the other hand, has already shown, in the relatively short period since 2008, shifts in attitude and action. They discontinued direct support to anti-gay-marriage campaigns, backed initiatives to ensure more understanding and protection of LGBT people, entered into dialogue with

the LGBT community, and launched the site mormonsandgays.org to help people reconcile their gender identities with their religion.⁴⁸ However, up to now, they have remained resolute in their position that acting upon homosexual feelings is a sin and that marriage is only for a man and a woman. Still, the history of change in Mormon doctrine and policies allows one to conjecture that this position could be a transitional phase and that further developments could follow. What factors could influence the future?

I readily admit that most of the following items have been thoroughly discussed in numerous books, articles, and blog posts, often with more and better-developed arguments. My approach is to try to add something from the international perspective. I start with factors more external to the Church, then I move to possible internal accommodations.

1. Growing Acceptance of LGBT People

The growing acceptance of what was once perceived as a bizarre lifestyle, mostly hidden, is inescapable. The recognition that homosexual orientation is not a choice, but the result of a complex interplay of factors, joins a growing conviction that LGBT people should be regarded as fully accepted members of society. A budding young generation, part of a broad informative social network, displays more tolerant views than previous generations and has more personal experiences with LGBT friends. The much-touted “danger to the family” that has been used as a conservative warcry has given way to incredulity that the small minority of same-sex couples has any such ability. This same tolerant view has also been adopted by various Christian churches, including American Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Evangelical Lutherans. There is little doubt that more and more congregations around the world will come to accept people in same-sex marriages as welcome and contributing parts of their communities. From that perspective it is also noteworthy that the countries that already legalized same-sex marriage are among the most democratic and developed countries in the world, while regimes known for their undemocratic and repressive policies are those denying such equality to (or even persecuting) gays and lesbians.

At present, the official Mormon counsel is:

While opposing homosexual behavior, the Church reaches out with understanding and respect to individuals who are attracted to those of the same gender. If members feel same-gender attraction but do not engage in any homosexual behavior, leaders should support and encourage them in their resolve to live the law of chastity and to control unrighteous thoughts.⁴⁹

This counsel contains a severe predicament. For more and more Mormons (as well as for members of other churches with a similar approach), the tension in this directive leads to a moral conflict when dealing with real people—family members and friends. Former opponents of gay marriage change sides once they are confronted with the tangible authenticity of a human soul they care for. They learn to overcome the perception of evil in his or her longing for a loving relation and its subsequent fulfillment. And what is “any homosexual behavior?” Sex, for sure, since religion is often exceedingly preoccupied with “illicit” sex as grievous sin. But, as in hetero relations, there are other forms of acting upon feelings, such as deep friendship, collaborating, helping the other, or sacrificing for him or her. And even giving sexual form to such attractions can be done in moral ways too, involving respect, patience, commitment, and fidelity. Focusing on those aspects allows seeing LGBT people in a broader and heart-warming light. As time goes by, LGBT individuals and the same-sex couples they form become a small but natural part in the landscape of diversity.

These developments could have some impact, directly or indirectly, on how Mormon Church leaders, on various levels, become more amenable to further adjustments.

2. Easing the Fear over Government Coercion

Over the past years, as the aggressive arguments against homosexual relations became viewed as inappropriate and merciless, and as the momentum in favor of same-sex marriage grew, religious leaders shifted to more defensive arguments. They take the form that the legalization of such marriages would compel churches and religiously affiliated services, as well as businesses, to accommodate the requirements of same-sex couples and penalize those who object as a matter of conscience. Public schools would have to apply non-discrimination programs and policies,

which would confuse children from conservative homes about their families' values. Examples, sometimes distorted, of such demands and situations substantiate the fears. However, more analysis and constructive dialogue between the various factions are helping to dispel scare tactics and to clarify misunderstandings. That churches could ever be compelled to marry same-sex couples is highly improbable. As far as I have read, religious-liberty experts, legislatures, and courts agree on that point, because churches, as independent institutions, can operate on the basis of their own internal regulations. The law cannot compel a church to marry even a hetero couple. Nowhere in the world has the Mormon Church ever been compelled to solemnize the marriage of a man and a woman when it deemed one or both as not compliant with its criteria for temple marriage. The Catholic Church has never been compelled to wed a man and a woman when canon law forbade it, for example, because one of them had divorced only civilly or because the bride or groom suffers from "antecedent and perpetual impotence to have intercourse."⁵⁰

In the case of conscientious objectors in civil marriage procedures and in religiously affiliated services, it seems that proper exemptions can be established in most cases.⁵¹ However, an important facet here is that growing acceptance of sexual orientation also leads to the defusing of many of the situations that people fear. Same-sex marriage is about the positive commitment between two people and cannot be put on par with other ethical issues, such as compelled cooperation in abortion or euthanasia. The normalization of LGBT individuals' involvement in society illustrates this evolution in countries where same-sex marriage has been legal for more than a decade and has become a nonissue. As adoption agencies discover that stable and well-adjusted same-sex partners can be excellent parents and can raise children equally well as heterosexuals, the fear of working with such a couple wanes.⁵² As marriage registrars, wedding photographers, florists, or cake bakers learn to focus on love rather than on gender, initial feelings of principled refusal can fade away. As children get involved with a friend who has two dads or two moms, and as their heterosexual and homosexual parents get to know each other, the experience opens doors.⁵³ In time, all of such developments can

make persons of good will understand that non-discrimination programs and policies aim at a more charitable society.

These considerations are not meant to minimize the complexity or the validity of the debate on religious freedom.⁵⁴ First, the concern about coercion is also reciprocal: "The real threat to religious liberty rests not in the ability of citizens to marry in contravention of one or more sects' doctrines, but in seeking to 'protect' those religious doctrines by imposing them as law controlling all."⁵⁵ Second, the debate encompasses other, more global and far-reaching issues than the LGBT topic alone. The risk of a religion imposing broad restrictive norms on the whole of society, far beyond what universal ethics can accept, is as real as a government's eliminating religious displays and activities which it considers incompatible with a civil society. Is the former or the latter worse? It depends on each case and on a wide array of factors.⁵⁶

3. Improving the Image of the Church

As part of its ambitious missionary effort, the Mormon Church has been trying for decades to improve its standing against frequent misrepresentations in the media and in literature. Its success has been limited, as surveys confirm. The Prop 8 debacle showed how the present power of social media can amplify the backlash. In 2012, during the U.S. presidential election, the numerous worldwide media reports about Mormonism frequently portrayed the Mormon Church as ultra-conservative, with discriminatory policies that persisted in its present homophobia. Prop 8 was often cited as illustration. On the other hand, Mormons Building Bridges' participation in the Salt Lake Gay Pride Parade was picked up by various media around the world and hailed as a ray of hope and change. Such difference in media impact cannot go unnoticed at Church headquarters. Equally telling are the incessant waves of public criticism leveled at the Catholic Church for some of its unswerving positions, both from the outside as massively from the inside. Whereas the Catholic leadership, from its peculiar powerful structure, continues to shrug off such attacks, it is more awkward for an active missionary church if negative publicity continues and even grows.

Outside the United States, it has been painful to see how members of area presidencies, mostly American or under Ameri-

can pressure, thought it necessary to make the voice of the Church known in countries where the legalization of same-sex marriage was being debated or had already been approved. Some of these seventies asked local Mormon stake presidents and bishops to get involved in campaigning against same-sex marriage. As far as I have heard, such requests mostly fell on deaf or bewildered ears. Mormons in tiny minority situations, as they are in most countries in the world, have other concerns than taking on their host society, attracting negative attention from human rights defenders, and isolating themselves even more than before for an already lost cause. Many of these local Mormons could also not understand why they should try to interfere in non-Mormon lives. Moreover, even if the proposed legalization of same-sex marriage triggered quite some debate in a few countries, overall it shriveled to a non-existent issue once same-sex marriage was approved. But had the local Mormon Church acted, the stigma of its already intolerant image would have been reinforced.

Though the Mormon Church insists on “understanding and respect to individuals who are attracted to those of the same gender,” rejecting same-sex marriage in civil society will be increasingly interpreted as a disgraceful attitude, if not plain discrimination. Some can argue that maintaining the rejection would win the sympathy of conservative citizens in nations around the world. To hope for such positive consideration toward the Church is to grossly miscalculate where such unbendable conservatism still prevails. Most countries that have already legalized same-sex marriage have done so with fairly wide support, often including support from more conservative parties—with the understanding that “conservative” outside the United States usually means “moderate” to American ears. The staunch opponents to same-sex marriage usually belong to uncompromising Christian churches from which little sympathy toward Mormonism is to be expected. And the Mormon Church would not want the praise of “conservative” countries, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, or Uganda, that criminalize homosexual acts and persecute or even execute gays and lesbians. At some point, to continue the battle against same-sex marriage will not be worth the stigma of intolerance, the

adversity from the media, the barrier to missionary work, the loss of members, or the internal tensions it creates.

4. *Distinguishing Guidelines for Members and for Non-Members*

Religions have the tendency to generalize their doctrines and norms as valid for the whole world. That aspiration is beneficial in the promotion of universal values such as justice, peace, or respect for human life. At some point, however, churches detail the scope of some of these values. For example, respect for human life, as we saw, differs in the respective Catholic and Mormon directions when it comes to abortion. Still, both churches formulate their principles as if meant for the whole world—hence, the Catholic repudiation of the Mormon standpoint.

The Mormon *Handbook 2* is “a guide for members of ward and stake councils” and applies to Latter-day Saints. Though many of the moral principles in the *Handbook* can be considered as having universal value, many others do not. The paragraph on “Same-Gender Marriages” states:

As a doctrinal principle, based on the scriptures, the Church affirms that marriage between a man and a woman is essential to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

Sexual relations are proper only between a man and a woman who are legally and lawfully wedded as husband and wife. Any other sexual relations, including those between persons of the same gender, are sinful and undermine the divinely created institution of the family. The Church accordingly affirms defining marriage as the legal and lawful union between a man and a woman.⁵⁷

How valid can this be for the non-Mormon world? If valid, the first sentence already asserts a form of exclusion for the whole Roman Catholic clergy, from the pope to every parish priest, as well as monks and nuns, for whom celibacy is the rule. The irony is that the Catholic Church bases that rule also on the scriptures—renouncing marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 19:12), abiding by Paul’s counsel that it is morally superior not to marry (1 Cor. 7:8, 38) and following the example of the unmarried Jesus. It is also easy to counter the Mormon viewpoint that marriage is essential for the “eternal destiny” of God’s children, as it is not a biblical concept (Matt. 22:23–30).

As to the rest of the *Handbook* paragraph on same-sex mar-

riage, the Mormon Church has the right to consider sexual relations proper only between a “legally and lawfully” wedded husband and wife and to discipline those who transgress only as far as it concerns its members. It may condemn those relations as “sinful” for the millions of non-Mormon couples who for social, economic, or administrative reasons cannot marry “legally and lawfully” or simply choose not to marry, though one can wonder what divisive effect such public condemnation of “the others” has, both inside and outside the Church. The same applies to same-sex couples who are not members. The Church has no jurisdiction over them.

Of course, inasmuch as the *Handbook* paragraph considers under “any other sexual relations” forms of irresponsible, selfish, cruel, or inhuman sexual behavior, the condemnation of such destructive behavior has universal value. But the statement makes no such distinction. As to non-hurtful relations between consenting adults, if Church leaders become willing to clarify that the Mormon view on marriage and sexual relations only applies to its own membership, without judging others, it would help decrease the pressure among Latter-day Saints to meddle with the lives of others, in particular of those who aspire to bring stability and security to their form of marriage.

5. Separating Civil Marriage and the Religious Wedding Ceremony

In worldwide perspective, a fundamental difference exists between civil marriage and the religious dimension for church members. It seems the Mormon Church, mainly due to its U.S. perspective, is not used to disentangling the two, since in the United States a recognized Church minister has the legal authority to marry two persons. The result is a conviction that marriage belongs to the religious realm and that Church authorities have the overall moral authority to pronounce who can marry.

However, most countries belonging to the Christian realm, which includes Europe, Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, Australasia, and Oceania, recognize only civil marriage as legally valid. The same is true in a number of Asian countries, such as Japan. The civil registration of marriage must precede any religious wedding, which is seen as an optional ceremony to solemnize the event, not a legal marriage. Such a civil regulation of marriage ap-

plies the same norms to all, guarantees uniform registration, avoids interfaith issues, and ensures equality—hence the relative ease with which these countries can legalize same-sex marriages, since gender, just like race or religion, cannot be a discriminating factor. Note that in a few countries, the religious representative of a recognized church, who has formally obtained the authority of a civil servant, can combine the civil marriage with the religious part.

If the Mormon Church can come to accept civil marriage in its separate legal realm, as it has to do already in most countries where it operates, and the subsequent religious wedding in its sacramental sphere, it could more easily consider same-sex marriage as a purely civil matter, unrelated to the Church's religious perspective.⁵⁸

6. Valorizing the Distinct Unitive Function in Marriage

This item moves my considerations to an internal step of moral interpretation. It is difficult to predict whether this adjustment would become the easiest or the most difficult. Logic could make it easy, principles difficult, and inflexibility impossible.

The Mormon Church has deeply invested itself in condemning homosexual relations with an emphasis on their unacceptable genital dimension. But the Church also justifies this condemnation because it does not consider same-sex marriage as a possibility; hence, any homosexual relations are bound to be sinful. In a 2006 interview with Elder Oaks and Elder Wickman on same-sex attraction, the situation of unmarried homosexuals is compared to that of any other unmarried person: "We expect celibacy of any person that is not married."⁵⁹

The comparison, however, is uneven when heterosexuals can marry and homosexuals can't. Logic begs to correct the equation: If same-sex marriage is legally allowed in civil society, then sexual relations within such marriages are not sinful. For the Catholic Church, as we saw, that step is impossible because such a union is "inherently nonprocreative" and the condemnation is universal for humankind. The Mormon Church has, at least in theory, more leeway because, as explained above, it can view the unitive function of sexual relations separately, as a way "to express love and to strengthen emotional and spiritual bonds." But it can accept such

relations only within the bonds of marriage. On the basis of those two premises, it does not seem an impossible step to also accept that, at least in the civil realm, a legally married gay or lesbian couple is not acting improperly. Even more, according to Mormon sexual ethics, it would be preferable for them to marry rather than having sex outside the bonds of marriage.

7. *Reviewing Marriage in the Context of Eternal Destiny*

I hesitated to include this last factor. The preceding considerations, which could facilitate the Church's acceptance of same-sex marriage, are more factual and based on pragmatic arguments. Here I move into a speculative doctrinal area. But the topic is difficult to avoid because the Mormon rejection of same-sex marriage has fundamentally to do with beliefs regarding the afterlife. The very first sentence of the *Handbook* paragraph on same-sex marriage reads:

As a doctrinal principle, based on the scriptures, the Church affirms that marriage between a man and a woman is essential to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.⁶⁰

Marriage is indeed a fundamental part of Mormon soteriology. *Gospel Fundamentals* states:

To live in the highest part of the celestial kingdom is called exaltation or eternal life. To be able to live in this part of the celestial kingdom, people must have been married in the temple and must have kept the sacred promises they made in the temple. They will receive everything our Father in Heaven has and will become like Him. They will even be able to have spirit children and make new worlds for them to live on, and do all the things our Father in Heaven has done. People who are not married in the temple may live in other parts of the celestial kingdom, but they will not be exalted.⁶¹

Essential to this view of "exaltation" is thus progression to godhood as a married couple, which includes the ability "to have spirit children"—hence, it seems, the implied need for a heterosexual dyad to procreate.

As already clear from the preceding discussion, that eternal perspective should not be a reason to deny the privilege of a civil marriage "until death do you part" to same-sex couples, in particular if they are not even members of the Church. In the context of legal debate, the use of theological arguments carries no weight,

and certainly not if the argument is, in the eyes of outsiders, of such a farfetched nature as sex in heaven to have spirit offspring.⁶²

But there is more to it. How tenable, historically and theologically within Mormonism itself, is the argument of the ability “to have spirit children” in heaven as basis for a *doctrinal* rejection of same-sex marriage on earth? The following discussion is not meant to argue in favor of such a revision that same-sex marriage would become acceptable in a Mormon temple. Rather, its aim is to review some of the tenets of the afterlife argument.

The concept of eternal marriage was introduced in the context of plural marriage (D&C 132). The historical and theological developments around this concept have been widely studied. I recognize their complexity, but the general outlines seem to be commonly accepted. The early introduction of polygamy under Joseph Smith found a justification in the weaving of dynastical bonds that would add to eternal glory—hence the initial “spiritual” marriages, both polyandrous and polygynous, even crossing lines among already-married couples. In the same period, Joseph Smith announced his expansive views on the progressive nature of God and the potential godhood of human beings. To what extent he accepted an active sexual life as a divine attribute seems less clear, but may be assumed. The terms “a continuation of the seeds forever and ever” and “as touching Abraham and his seed, out of the world they should continue” in the revelation of plural marriage (D&C 132:19, 30) point to such understanding. Plural wives are given, not only “to multiply and replenish the earth,” but “for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men” (verse 63). The begetting of physical children on earth seems to continue as “having” spiritual children in heaven, but what the latter meant technically was left to interpretation and imagination.

In Utah, polygamy became structured polygyny, openly proclaimed, including sexual relations and offspring, with elaborate social, moral, and theological justifications. For the theological part, Brigham Young, Orson Pratt, and others sexualized God, gave substance to his divine wife or even wives, tied their union to the birth of myriads of spirit children in the preexistence, justified polygamy for helping the choicest of those spirits come to

earth in faithful families of chosen “Israelite” lines, and imagined the same divine procreative future for exalted gods and their goddesses on distant worlds in the universe. The speculations were uninhibited (and sometimes contradictory), the concretizations audacious, including the teaching that God the Father literally impregnated Mary. Plural marriage was defined as a prerequisite for exaltation.

With the end of official support for polygamy in 1890, the necessity of plural marriage for exaltation was abolished, but what remained was the plan of progression, from preexistent spirit children, through earth probation, to the exaltation a couple earns through eternal marriage. That attainment of godhood still included the divine function of “having” spirit children, so that each exalted couple could become heavenly parents. Though these doctrines were now expressed in more sober, sanitized terms, the nineteenth-century sources, as well as more recent, equally explicit texts by outspoken Church authorities, clearly confirm the procreative functions as part of exaltation. It is not surprising that outsiders who describe Mormon doctrine often focus on that peculiar perspective. Anti-Mormonism turned it into *The God Makers*. Vulgar derision turns it into sordid depictions. Moreover, all that polygamy could prompt in prurient fascination tainted the rest of Mormon theology. Even modern, neutrally meant treatises on Mormonism continue to focus on those bizarre sexual aspects, based on the sources written by Mormon authorities from the 1850s up to now.

But to what extent are sexual relations essential to “having” spirit children and therefore “essential to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children?” Mormon scriptures and leaders’ commentaries allow at least two interpretations of “having” spirit children. Next to literal sexual relations, pregnancy, and birth, there is the organization of “intelligence”—eternal matter—into “intelligences,” understood as individual spirit beings or the precursors thereof. Whether the two interpretations can intersect or not is unclear. But the tangible representation of divine sex and the birthing of billions of spirits raises awkward questions as to frequency, timing, and the lingering background of polygamy.⁶³ Eugene England remarked, “God has certainly found more

efficient ways to produce spirit children than by turning celestial partners into mere birth machines. To anticipate such a limited, unequal role for women in eternity insults and devalues them.”⁶⁴

Could the Mormon concept of eternal destiny therefore not focus more on its broader message—the stirring vision of eternal togetherness? If chastely and lyrically expressed, the possibility of eternal togetherness is an ideal for a loving couple, for parents and children, or for dear friends, in particular in the face of death. Numerous poets have imagined it or lamented its absence. Eternal togetherness is one of the most poignant and tender doctrines of Mormonism. Joseph Smith’s vision of the eternities, where God’s children blend in a network of blissful generations—referring to the biblical promises to Abraham and to the “planting in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers”—has an unmistakable grandeur. That sacred emotion was probably closer to Joseph Smith’s glorious panorama of the eternities than what the cruder and often shocking assertions of later Church leaders included. Precisely that difference brings us to consider the place of same-sex partnership in the religious realm of Mormonism.

Is the “eternal destiny” of God’s children only and of necessity a literal continuation of marital relations, including sex and child-bearing as part of divine “love,” with the perpetuation of the procreative function because that is what heavenly parents do?

Or is “eternal destiny” the ultimate admission of God’s worthy children into a celestial world of family relations, intertwined through all those marriages over the course of human history—a majestic network which genealogical research tries to reconstitute even now as much as possible? That network also includes the unmarried, the infants, children who died young, and—who could exclude them?—gays and lesbians, because all of these are also part of families. The basis here is also love, but in a different meaning of the unitive function—the unification of humankind in familial relations.⁶⁵ This vision of the celestial world does not exclude the continuation of marital relations, but it does not require them. Eternal marriage can and should live on as a core tenet of

Mormon faith, but without being so crucial as to devalue all other forms of eternal joy.

Note that the history of the more detailed doctrine of divine sexual functions as part of preexistence and worlds to populate runs pretty much parallel with the doctrines that detail racial groups in the preexistence, fence-sitters, and the priesthood ban. Since these doctrines were apparently never emphasized by Joseph Smith but were subsequent developments, would not also in this case the conclusion apply, as with the explanations for the priesthood ban, that “the Church is not bound by speculation or opinions given with limited understanding”?⁶⁶

Conclusion

On the occasion of the election of Pope Francis in March 2013, the First Presidency of the Mormon Church released a statement of “warm wishes,” which included the sentence: “We have been honored and pleased as our two faiths have worked together on issues of faith, morality and service to the poor and needy.”⁶⁷

Service to the poor and needy is evident. Humanitarian cooperation should meet no boundaries or restrictions. Catholics and Mormons, together with all people of good will, can combine forces in any situation of material need. And they do. But how well have the two churches worked together, or can they work together, on issues of faith and morality?

In comparing the Catholic and the Mormon churches, this article hardly touched on matters of faith, in the sense of theological tenets. The divide there is colossal, even if both churches use similar vocabulary for many concepts. Official and semi-official Catholic statements on Mormonism make clear that the latter does not belong to the Christian family and that its theology and added scriptures are blasphemous.⁶⁸ From its side, the Mormon Church, in spite of occasional diplomatic language, cannot hide that numerous passages in its founding texts reciprocate with similar characterizations.

As to morality, this article tried to show that, although the Catholic Church and the Mormon Church stand at first glance on common ground in human life ethics, even there the differences are substantial. Giving each other occasional support in publicly

debated matters of “morality,” such as with Proposition 8, turns out to be a perilous endeavor. As soon as the differences come into play, the one church cannot support the other anymore, such as with ESCR or with birth control insurance coverage. To what extent the positions on same-sex marriage may diverge in the future remains to be seen, but the various factors mentioned in this article indicate that the Mormon Church is prone to respond more flexibly to social change and human needs.

Indeed, a basic difference from the Catholic Church resides in the guarded openness of Mormon leaders to alter viewpoints and in the subsequent modifications that Mormon policies can undergo in favor of more equality and tolerance. That is the privilege of a living church where even one of its highest and famously doctrinaire leaders could say:

Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomsoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world. We get our truth and our light line upon line and precept upon precept.⁶⁹

Notes

1. I wish to thank Lavina Fielding Anderson, Craig Harline, and Armand L. Mauss for their valuable comments on the drafts of this article. Of course, the responsibility for the content is only mine.

2. See, for example, Richard P. McBrien, *The Church: The Evolution of Catholicism* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008); Aidan Nichols, *The Shape of Catholic Theology: An Introduction to Its Sources, Principles, and History* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991).

3. Numerous books and articles have been written on Vatican II and continue to be written as to its long-term effects. See, e.g., Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2012); Mathew L. Lamb and Mathew Levering, eds., *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008); Melissa J. Wilde, *Vatican II: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Change* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007).

4. See, for example, Rachel Anne Fenton, “Catholic Doctrine versus Women’s Rights: The New Italian Law on Assisted Reproduction,” *Medical Law Review* 14, no. 1 (2006): 73–107; Rishona Fleishman, “The Battle

against Reproductive Rights: The Impact of the Catholic Church on Abortion Law in Both International and Domestic Arenas,” *Emory International Law Review* 14 (2000): 277–314; Anthony Gill, *Rendering unto Caesar: The Catholic Church and the State in Latin America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Mala Htun, *Sex and the State: Abortion, Divorce, and the Family under Latin American Dictatorships and Democracies* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Carolyn M. Warner, *Confessions of an Interest Group: The Catholic Church and Political Parties in Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

5. I do not fully reference the basic Catholic magisterial documents I quote from, nor similar basic Mormon texts such as *Handbook 2* or *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*. These documents, provided by the respective official church sites, are readily found on the internet. The English texts of the Catholic documents I quote from come directly from the Vatican site <http://www.vatican.va>.

6. See, for example, Charles E. Curran, ed., *Change in Official Catholic Moral Teachings* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003); Cathleen M. Kaveny, “Development of Catholic Moral Doctrine: Probing the Subtext,” *University of St. Thomas Law Journal* 1, no. 1 (2003): 234–252; John T. Noonan Jr., *A Church That Can and Cannot Change: The Development of Catholic Moral Teaching* (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); John Seidler, “Contested Accommodation: The Catholic Church as a Special Case of Social Change,” *Social Forces* 64, no. 4 (1986): 847–74.

7. Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Mauss, “Rethinking Retrenchment: Course Corrections in the Ongoing Campaign for Respectability,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 44, no. 4 (2011): 1–42.

8. It is noteworthy that, also among Catholic populations, there are vast differences between countries, between ethnic groups, and between urban or rural situations, as to religious identity, forms of devotion, liturgical preferences, and compliance to rules—a diversity unknown in the centralized, correlated Mormon Church. For example, considered in their average conduct, Dutch Catholics are quite different from their Polish or Irish coreligionists, who, in turn, would be surprised at Catholicism in some regions in Latin America or in Africa. Catholicism in the United States, even taking into account its internal diversity, has become more conservative and principled than in many West European countries. This worldwide diversity is often the result of retention strategies: local Catholic leaders allow Catholicism to adapt to the local religious market situation in order to keep or to regain adherents. The directions can be as varied as re-traditionalization, modernization, or pseudo-

indigenization. The literature on these “Catholicisms” is vast. A few examples: Karen Andersen, “Irish Secularization and Religious Identities: Evidence of an Emerging New Catholic Habitus,” *Social Compass* 57, no. 1 (2010): 15–39; R. Scott Appleby, “Diversity as a Source of Catholic Common Ground,” *New Theology Review* 13, no. 3 (2013): 15–25; John Caiazza, “American Conservatism and the Catholic Church,” *Modern Age* 52, no. 1 (2010): 14–24; Edward L. Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism in Latin America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011); Kees de Groot, “Two Alienation Scenarios: Explaining the Distance between Catholics and Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands,” in *Religious Identity and National Heritage: Empirical-Theological Perspectives*, edited by Francis-Vincent Anthony and Hans-Georg Ziebertz (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 195–212; Nicholas Jay Demerath III, “The Rise of ‘Cultural Religion’ in European Christianity: Learning from Poland, Northern Ireland, and Sweden,” *Social Compass* 47, no. 1 (2000): 127–39; Steffen Dix, “Religious Plurality within a Catholic Tradition: A Study of the Portuguese Capital, Lisbon, and a Brief Comparison with Mainland Portugal,” *Religion* 39, no. 2 (2009): 182–93; Frances Hagopian, ed., *Religious Pluralism, Democracy, and the Catholic Church in Latin America* (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009); Ludovic Lado, *Catholic Pentecostalism and the Paradoxes of Africanization: Processes of Localization in a Catholic Charismatic Movement in Cameroon* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Cristián Parker Gumucio, “Catholicismes Populaires Urbains et Globalisation: Étude de Cas au Chili,” *Social Compass* 45, no. 4 (1998): 595–618; Guillermo Trejo, “Religious Competition and Ethnic Mobilization in Latin America: Why the Catholic Church Promotes Indigenous Movements in Mexico,” *American Political Science Review* 103, no. 3 (2009): 323–42.

9. Note, however, that the aims of Vatican II and of correlation were quite different. In the terms of Armand Mauss’s distinction between assimilation and retrenchment, Vatican II was more an effort at assimilation, i.e., how to bring the Catholic Church into the modern world, closer to the people, away from Latin, with more democratic participation and dialogue, decentralization, and more adaptations to local cultures. The Mormon correlation movement aimed at more central control through worldwide standardization in organization and curriculum, including a formal attachment to the King James language in the standard works—hence, retrenchment.

10. Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* [Encyclical Letter on the Regularization of Birth], sec. 11–12.

11. See, for example, Donald P. Ascì, *The Conjugal Act as a Personal Act: A Study of the Catholic Concept of the Conjugal Act in the Light of Chris-*

tian Anthropology (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002); John Boyle, ed., *Creative Love: The Ethics of Human Reproduction* (Front Royal: Christendom Press, 1989); Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Catholic Sexual Ethics and the Dignity of the Person: A Double Message," *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): 120–50; Frank R. Flaspohler, "All Who Live in Love: The Law and Theology behind Same-Sex Marriage," *Loyola Journal of Public Interest Law* 11, no. 1 (2009): 87–130; Benedict M. Guevin, "Reproductive Technologies in Light of 'Dignitas Personae,'" *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (2010): 51–59; John Haas, "The Inseparability of the Two Meanings of the Marriage Act," in *Reproductive Technologies, Marriage, and the Church: Proceedings of 1988 Bishops' Workshop*, edited by Donald G. McCarthy (Braintree, Mass.: Pope John Center, 1988), 89–106; James P. Hanigan, "Unitive and Procreative Meaning: The Inseparable Link," in *Sexual Diversity and Catholicism: Toward the Development of Moral Theology*, edited by Patricia Beattie Jung (Collegeville: Liturgical Press), 22–38; Bernard Häring, "The Inseparability of the Unitive-Procreative Functions of the Marital Act," in *Contraception: Authority and Dissent*, edited by Charles E. Curran (New York: Herder, 1969), 176–85.

12. *Handbook* 2, 21.4.4.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *True to the Faith* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 26.

15. See Donald W. Hastings, Charles H. Reynolds, and Ray R. Canning, "Mormonism and Birth Planning: The Discrepancy between Church Authorities' Teachings and Lay Attitudes," *Population Studies* 26, no. 1 (1972): 19–28; Tim B. Heaton and Sandra Calkins, "Family Size and Contraceptive Use among Mormons: 1965–75," *Review of Religious Research* 25, no. 2 (1983): 102–14; Melissa Proctor, "Bodies, Babies, and Birth Control," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 3 (2003): 159–75.

16. *Humanae Vitae*, sec. 14.

17. "Birth Control," *Catholic Answers*, imprimatur August 10, 2004, <http://www.catholic.com/tracts/birth-control> (accessed April 21, 2013).

18. In an HIV-discordant couple, only one of the two partners is HIV-infected. See Luc Bovens, "Can the Catholic Church Agree to Condom Use by HIV-Discordant Couples?" *Journal of Medical Ethics* 35, no. 12 (2009): 743–46. For studies of contraception in Catholicism, see M. John Farrelly, "Contraception as a Test Case for the Development of Doctrine," *The Heythrop Journal* 49, no. 3 (2008): 453–72; Rachel K. Jones and Joerg Dreweke, *Countering Conventional Wisdom: New Evidence on Religion and Contraceptive Use* (New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2011);

John T. Noonan Jr. and John Thomas Noonan, *Contraception: A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists*, enlarged edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012).

19. *Humanae Vitae*, sec. 16.

20. *Humanae Vitae*, sec. 10.

21. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2370.

22. *Code of Canon Law*, canon 1398.

23. The case drew worldwide attention. See details and media references in the Wikipedia entry http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009_Brazilian_girl_abortion_case (accessed April 21, 2013).

24. *Handbook 2*, 21.4.1.

25. *Ibid.*

26. "Abortion," *Catholic Answers*, August 10, 2004, <http://www.catholic.com/tracts/abortion> (accessed April 21, 2013).

27. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* [Encyclical Letter on the Value and Inviolability of Human Life], sec. 14.

28. See, for example, the 2008 Instruction *Dignitas Personae* by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

29. See Cindy Wooden, "Embryos Cannot Be Destroyed Even for Important Research, Says Pope," *Catholic News Service*, November 14, 2011, <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1104448.htm> (accessed April 20, 2013); Pat Perriello, "Stem Cell Research and the Francis Papacy," *National Catholic Reporter*, April 15, 2013, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/stem-cell-research-and-francis-papacy> (accessed April 30, 2013).

30. "Statement Regarding Stem Cell Research," August 10, 2001, <http://www.ldstoday.com/archive/news/stemcellstmt.htm> (accessed April 20, 2013).

31. See Jan Cienski, "Mormons May Be Key in Stem-Cell Debate," *Worldwide Religious News*, August 4, 2001, <http://wwrn.org/articles/5900/?&place=united-states§ion=cloning> (accessed April 20, 2013).

32. "Embryonic Stem-Cell Research," *Newsroom of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/official-statement/embryonic-stem-cell-research> (accessed April 20, 2013).

33. "Commentary—Embryonic Stem-Cell Research," *Newsroom of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, May 26, 2005, <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/embryonic-stem-cell-research> (accessed April 20, 2013).

34. *Handbook 2*, 21.3.3.

35. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2277.

36. John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris* [Apostolic Letter on the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering], sec. 19. See also John Paul II, "Address to

the Participants in the International Congress on ‘Life-Sustaining Treatments and Vegetative State: Scientific Advances and Ethical Dilemmas,’ March 20, 2004, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/2004/march/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20040320_congress-fiamc_en.html (accessed April 20, 2013).

37. *Handbook 2*, 21.3.8.

38. Isaiah Bennett, “Did the Mormons’ President Downplay a Central Teaching of Mormonism?” *Catholic Answers*, <http://www.catholic.com/quickquestions/did-the-mormons-president-downplay-a-central-teaching-of-mormonism> (accessed April 20, 2013).

39. Edward Peters, “Review of Isaiah Bennett, When Mormons Call,” *Canon Law Info*, updated January 10, 2013, http://www.canonlaw.info/a_mormons.htm (accessed April 23, 2013).

40. Though Latin America remains overwhelmingly Catholic (with internal variations), Pentecostals grew from an estimated 12 million in the 1970s to an estimated 75 million in 2006. See Pew Research, “Overview: Pentecostalism in Latin America,” October 5, 2006, <http://www.pewforum.org/2006/10/05/overview-pentecostalism-in-latin-america> (accessed April 30, 2013). The phenomenon has been widely studied. See, for example, James W. Dow, “Protestantism in Mesoamerica: The Old within the New,” in *Holy Saints and Fiery Preachers: The Anthropology of Protestantism in Mexico and Central America*, edited by James W. Dow and Alan R. Sandstrom (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2001), 1–23; Toomas Gross, “Changing Faith: The Social Costs of Protestant Conversion in Rural Oaxaca,” *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 77, no. 3 (2012): 344–71; Bernardo Guerrero, “The Street Is Free: Identity and Politics among Evangelicals in Chile,” *Religion, State and Society* 40, no. 1 (2012): 11–23; Carlos Garma Navarro, “Religious Change in Mexico: Perspectives from Recent Data,” *Social Sciences and Missions* 24, no. 1 (2011): 75–100; David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

41. Paul Freston, “Religious Pluralism, Democracy, and Human Rights in Latin America,” in *Religion and the Global Politics of Human Rights*, edited by Thomas Banchoff and Robert Wuthnow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 102.

42. As quoted in Samuel Escobar, “Christianity in Latin America: Changing Churches in a Changing Continent,” in *Introducing World Christianity*, edited by Charles E. Farhadian (Chichester, West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 174.

43. “LDS church unveils plans to do less door-to-door proselytizing,” *Catholic Answers*, June 24, 2013, <http://forums.catholic.com/showthread.php?t=800298> (accessed July 8, 2013).

44. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2357.

45. In the magisterial document “Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons,” June 3, 2003.

46. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2358. In 1986 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith sent a letter to the Catholic bishops “on the pastoral care of homosexual persons” in which it deplors “that homosexual persons have been and are the object of violent malice in speech or in action. Such treatment deserves condemnation from the Church’s pastors wherever it occurs.” However, most of the long letter is to reiterate that homosexuality is a “moral disorder” and to condemn those who within the church argue otherwise. See the magisterial document “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons,” October 1, 1986.

47. Keith Fourier, “On Plane Back to Rome: What Did the Pope Really Say about Homosexual Practice vs. Media Hype?” *Catholic Online*, July 30, 2013, http://www.catholic.org/international/international_story.php?id=51888 (accessed July 31, 2013).

48. Matt Canham, Derek P. Jensen, and Rosemary Winters, “Salt Lake City Adopts Pro-Gay Statutes—with LDS Church Support,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 10, 2009, http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_13758070 (accessed April 5, 2013); Erik Eckholm, “Mormons Endorse Plan to Admit Gay Scouts,” *New York Times*, April 26, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/27/us/mormon-church-backs-boy-scouts-plan-to-lift-ban-on-gay-youths.html?_r=0 (accessed May 7, 2013); Stephanie Mencimer, “Mormon Church Abandons Its Crusade against Gay Marriage,” *Mother Jones*, April 12, 2013, <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2013/04/prop-8-mormons-gay-marriage-shift> (accessed May 5, 2013); “Mormon Church Shift on Gay Marriage Brings Momentum to Pro-Equality Camp,” *Huffington Post*, March 13, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/26/conservatives-give-gay-marriage-momentum_n_2958314.html (accessed April 27, 2013); Peggy Fletcher Stack, “New Mormon Church Website Has Softer Tone on Gays,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 7, 2012, <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/news/55407878-78/gay-church-says-lds.html.csp> (accessed April 17, 2013); Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Years of Tension Yield to Thaw between Gays, Mormons,” *Religion News Service*, January 3, 2013, <http://www.religionnews.com/2013/01/03/years-of-tension-yield-to-thaw-between-gays-mormons/> (accessed April 16, 2013).

49. *Handbook 2*, 21.4.6.

50. *Code of Canon Law*, canons 1084–5.

51. Jurisdictions to determine if such exemptions differ from coun-

try to country: see Bruce MacDougall, Elsje Bonthuys, Kenneth Norrie, and Marjolein van den Brink, "Conscientious Objection to Creating Same-Sex Unions: An International Analysis," *Canadian Journal of Human Rights* 1, no. 1 (2012): 127–64. Exemptions, it should be recognized, create their own set of challenges, but these can be overcome. See Michael Kent Curtis, "Unique Religious Exemption from Antidiscrimination Laws in the Case of Gays? Putting the Call for Exemptions for Those Who Discriminate against Married or Marrying Gays in Context," *Wake Forest Law Review* 47, no. 2 (2012): 173–209; Robin Fretwell Wilson, "Insubstantial Burdens: The Case for Government Employee Exemptions to Same-Sex Marriage Laws," *Northwestern Journal of Law and Social Policy* 5, no. 2 (2010): 318–68.

52. The well-being of children with same-sex parents is a legitimate concern. The issue has been used extensively to oppose same-sex marriage. See Courtney G. Joslin, "Searching for Harm: Same-Sex Marriage and the Well-Being of Children," *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* 46, no. 81 (2011): 81–102. Long-term, population-based sample analyses to measure the well-being of children with same-sex parents are still in the making, but existing studies give reassuring indications. See, e.g., Alicia Crowl, Soyeon Ahn, and Jean Baker, "A Meta-Analysis of Developmental Outcomes for Children of Same-Sex and Heterosexual Parents," *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* 4, no. 3 (2008): 385–406; Jeremy R. Garrett and John D. Lantos, "Marriage and the Well-Being of Children," *Pediatrics* 131, no. 3 (2013): 559–63; Timothy F. Murphy, "Same-Sex Marriage: Not a Threat to Marriage or Children," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 42, no. 3 (2011): 288–304; Andrew J. Perrin, Philip N. Cohen, and Neal Caren, "Are Children of Parents Who Had Same-Sex Relationships Disadvantaged? A Scientific Evaluation of the No-Differences Hypothesis," *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health* 17, no. 3 (2013): 327–36; Ellen C. Perrin, Benjamin S. Siegel, and the Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, "Technical Report: Promoting the Well-Being of Children Whose Parents Are Gay or Lesbian," *Pediatrics* 131, no. 4 (2013): e1374–e1383; Daniel Potter, "Same-Sex Parent Families and Children's Academic Achievement," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 74, no. 3 (2012): 556–71.

53. The process is mutually reinforcing: "Children in same-sex families are generally doing well but their situation could be improved if their parents' relationship were to be socially and legally recognized." Guido Pennings, "Evaluating the Welfare of the Child in Same-Sex Families," *Human Reproduction* 26, no. 7 (2011): 1609. Similarly, "studies suggest that there is an association between the stigma that same-sex parent families experience and child well-being." Simon Robert Crouch, Elizabeth

Waters, Ruth McNair, Jennifer Power, and Elise Davis, "ACHESS—The Australian Study of Child Health in Same-Sex Families: Background Research, Design and Methodology," *BMC Public Health* 12 (2012): 646. See also Juliet E. Hart, Jon E. Mourot, and Megan Aros, "Children of Same-Sex Parents: In and Out of the Closet," *Educational Studies* 38, no. 3 (2012): 277–81. In other words, comparative studies on child well-being will gain in validity if they can be conducted in environments where same-sex parents are as well accepted as others. Legalizing same-sex marriage also has vital implications for the basic legal rights of their children. See Catherine E. Smith, "Equal Protection for Children of Same-Sex Parents," *Washington University Law Review*, forthcoming; Tanya Washington, "What about the Children? Child-Centered Challenges to Same-Sex Marriage Bans," *Whittier Journal of Child and Family Advocacy* 12, no. 1 (2012): 1–22.

54. For an analysis of the Mormon position on religious freedom within shifting cultural backgrounds in the United States, see Mauro Properzi, "LDS Understandings of Religious Freedom: Responding to the Shifting Cultural Pendulum," *Journal of Mormon History* 38, no. 4 (2012): 128–47. Among the publications that discuss same-sex marriage and religious freedom, I found the following helpful: Eric Alan Isaacson, "Are Same-Sex Marriages Really a Threat to Religious Liberty?" *Stanford Journal of Civil Rights & Civil Liberties* 8, no. 1 (2012): 123–53; Steven Kettell, "I Do, Thou Shalt Not: Religious Opposition to Same-Sex Marriage in Britain," *The Political Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (2013): 247–55; Douglas Laycock and Thomas C. Berg, "Protecting Same-Sex Marriage and Religious Liberty," *Virginia Law Review in Brief* 99, no. 1 (2013): 1–9; Ira C. Lupu and Robert W. Tuttle, "Same-Sex Equality and Religious Freedom," *Northwestern Journal of Law & Social Policy* 5, no. 2 (2010): 274–306; Michael J. Perry, "The Right to Religious Freedom, with Particular Reference to Same-Sex Marriage," *Journal of Law, Religion and State*, 1, no. 2 (2012): 147–79.

55. Isaacson, "Are Same-Sex Marriages Really a Threat to Religious Liberty?" 151.

56. Also, the debate on religious freedom plays out differently in various countries. Arguments used by religious leaders in the United States can be misinterpreted and misused in other settings, while governmental limitations of religious freedom can be defended as needed to counter sectarian radicalization that can destabilize a country. More comparative insights are needed to understand these competing demands and concerns, both from religion and from government, in order to find appropriate balances between them in international perspective. For this discussion, see, for example, Rex Ahdar and Ian Leigh, *Religious Freedom in the Liberal State*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013);

Fred Dallmayr, "Whither Democracy? Religion, Politics and Islam," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 37, no. 4 (2011): 437–48; Francois Facchini, "Religion, Law and Development: Islam and Christianity—Why Is It in Occident and not in the Orient That Man Invented the Institutions of Freedom?" *European Journal of Law and Economics* 29, no. 1 (2010): 103–29; Brian J. Grim and Roger Finke, *The Price of Freedom Denied: Religious Persecution and Conflict in the 21st Century* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehar, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Samuel James Rascoff, "Establishing Official Islam? The Law and Strategy of Counter-Radicalization," *Stanford Law Review* 64, no. 1 (2012): 125–90; Timothy Samuel Shah, Alfred Stepan, and Monica Duffy Toft, eds., *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); John Witte Jr. and Nina-Louisa Arold, "Lift High the Cross: Contrasting the New European and American Cases on Religious Symbols on Government Property," *Emory International Law Review* 25, no. 5 (2011): 5–55.

57. *Handbook 2*, 21.4.10.

58. On a side note, generalizing the requirement of a preceding civil marriage to the whole church, also in the United States, and defining the temple ceremony as a "sealing," not as a marriage, could help alleviate the tragic situations where family members cannot attend the temple ceremony. I am a personal witness of what heartbreak and enmity toward the Church the present situation causes, in particular in the case of young converts who join the Church without their parents and subsequently marry in the Church. The civil marriage could become the festive event where all are invited, while the sealing, a few days or weeks later, could be a sober ceremony receiving its full religious attention from the couple and the initiated. It could be a uniform system for the whole Church worldwide.

59. Interview with Elder Dallin H. Oaks and Elder Lance B. Wickman: "Same-Gender Attraction," *Newsroom of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, December 12, 2012, <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/interview-oaks-wickman-same-gender-attraction> (accessed April 21, 2013). The interview was given in 2006.

60. *Handbook 2*, 21.4.10.

61. *Gospel Fundamentals* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2002), 201.

62. In their opposition to same-sex marriage, churches usually emphasize their theological arguments for their own membership, while stressing the more secular arguments in the public debate. See the article by Kettell, note 54. In that sense, the Mormon Church's argumenta-

tion against same-sex marriage is somewhat ambivalent as the core theological reason is avoided in the public debate.

63. Taylor G. Petrey raises such questions in his article “Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 44, no. 4 (2011): 106–41. Weird calculations of pregnancy and birth rates of Mormon “goddesses” are also found in anti-Mormon material.

64. Eugene England, “On Fidelity, Polygamy, and Celestial Marriage,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20, no. 4 (1987): 148.

65. Is it possible that the Mormon Church is already in a process of de-emphasizing the doctrine of literal offspring in heaven in favor of a more graspable and less challenging imagery of eternal family life? “To have spirit children” in married afterlife is still part of the 1997 edition of *Gospel Principles*: “Heavenly Father has given us the law of eternal marriage so we can become like him. We must live this law to be able to have spirit children” (242), but the second sentence does not appear anymore in the printed version of 2009 (220). That sentence is still in chapter 38 of the online version, <http://www.lds.org/library/display/0,4945,11-1-13-48,00.html> (accessed August 3, 2013). The 2009 edition kept one earlier mention of the concept in presenting the plan in the preexistence: “We would become heavenly parents and have spirit children just as He does (11). In *True to the Faith* (2004) no reference is made to having spirit children as part of exaltation. The text defines exaltation as follows: “Eternal life, or exaltation, is to inherit a place in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom, where we will live in God’s presence and continue as families” (52). That representation seems to accentuate a more classic eternal togetherness as an extension of family life rather than the procreative dynamics “to have spirit children and make new worlds for them to live on,” as stated in *Gospel Fundamentals* (201). One may wonder if these rephrasings are part of a deliberate effort to downplay similar daring Mormon doctrinal traditions such as the Lorenzo Snow couplet, which President Hinckley seemed to trivialize in his talking to the press. See Michael W. Fordham, “Does President Gordon B. Hinckley Understand LDS Doctrine?” *FAIR*, http://www.fairlds.org/authors/fordham-michael/does_president_hinckley_understand_lds_doctrine (accessed August 4, 2013).

66. “Church Statement Regarding ‘Washington Post’ Article on Race and the Church,” *Newsroom of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, February 29, 2012, <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/racial-remarks-in-washington-post-article> (accessed April 23, 2013).

67. “First Presidency Offers ‘Warmest Wishes’ to Newly-Elected Pope Francis,” *Newsroom of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*,

March 13, 2013, <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/first-president-offers-warmest-wishes-pope-francis> (accessed April 20, 2013).

68. Again, the American West, with the historic coexistence of Mormons and Catholics, is not representative of the rest of the world. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, scores of Catholic authors have published scathing critiques of Mormonism. In the 1980s the denigration became part of the broader anti-cultist movement. The 2001 rejection by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of the validity of Mormon baptism is significant not only in a theological sense, but also in its time frame as President Gordon B. Hinckley had been actively seeking for more interfaith tolerance and cooperation in the preceding years. In 2008 the same congregation directed Catholic dioceses throughout the world to keep the Latter-day Saints from microfilming information contained in Catholic parish registers “so as not to cooperate with the erroneous practices of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” Chaz Muth, “Vatican Letter Directs Bishops to Keep Parish Records from Mormons,” *Catholic News Service*, May 2, 2008, <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0802443.htm> (accessed April 29, 2013). The abrupt move, ten days before Pope Benedict XVI’s visit to the United States with an ecumenical prayer service attended by Mormon apostles M. Russell Ballard and Quentin L. Cook, seemed a shot across the bow. The recent election of a pope from Argentina does not augur well for a Catholic-Mormon rapprochement, taking the inroads of the Mormon Church in Latin America into account. As noted previously, the present surge in Mormon missionary work and strategies is not prone to lead to better institutional relations on the highest level, though local initiatives of interfaith dialogue and cooperation will meet little obstruction. *Catholic Answers* offers the present assessment of Mormonism: “While the Catholic Church would reject nothing that is true or good in Mormonism or any other world religion, Catholic theology would have to note that there is a tremendous amount in Mormonism that is neither true nor good. Further, because Mormonism presents itself as a form of Christianity yet is incompatible with the historic Christian faith, sound pastoral practice would need to warn the Christian faithful: Mormon theology is blasphemous, polytheistic, and cannot be considered on par with the theology of other Christian groups,” mentioned in “What Does the Catholic Church Say about the Practices and Beliefs of Mormonism?” <http://www.catholic.com/quickquestions/what-does-the-catholic-church-say-about-the-practices-and-beliefs-of-mormonism> (accessed May 17, 2013).

69. Bruce R. McConkie, “All Are Alike unto God,” Address, CES Religious Educators Symposium, *Brigham Young University Speeches*, August

18, 1978, <http://speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=1570> (accessed April 20, 2013).