

LETTERS

Transcendent Sacrament

I was particularly touched in *Dialogue* 44, no. 3 (Fall 2011), by “To Bless and Sanctify: Three Meditations on the Sacrament.” I was stirred and stimulated by Kris Wright’s “Baking a Sacrament Prayer” (203–7), by Matthew Bowman’s “This Is My Body: A Mormon Sacrament” (208–14), and especially by the culture-transcending experience related in Kristine L. Haglund’s, “Holy, Holy, Holy” (214–17).

It brought to mind a culture-transcendent experience of my own on Russian Easter, April 30, 1989, before the fall of the Soviet Union, in our family’s Long Beach Third Ward.

In January, we had met Marina, our young tour guide. She had just received permission to leave the Soviet Union for the first time and asked if she and her best friend, Lena, could stay a few days with us. We said yes, of course. Our home was their first stop.

Both were devout Russian Orthodox believers; and we shared their most important holy day by attending midnight services at the closest Russian Orthodox Church. Later that same Easter Sunday, they attended sacrament meeting with us in Long Beach Third Ward. As the bread tray was being passed along that hard wooden pew, Marina whispered, “Is it permitted? We are not members of your church.” I replied spontaneously, “Of course! We are all Christians and believers here.”

A short time later, I began to realize that I had just taken the sacrament for the first time in a mysteriously new and wonderful way. I realized that I was more than a member of the Mormon Church but part of a universal

community of Christians. I began to experience an extraordinary new freedom to participate with any other believer in any other worship setting. The setting became insignificant. The institution became insignificant. It no longer mattered whether it was formal or informal. By that simple act of taking bread together, I realized I had joined a far more fundamental and universal spiritual community.

As I struggled to express this experience in words, I wrote a poem, “Russian Easter in Long Beach Third Ward,” the last stanza of which reads:

Then we three as one
with tear-stained smiles
and Slavic souls communing
thus took the broken loaf
and through the Ancient date
the Mystery rose to fuse
the Awful Fission.

The experience did not stop there. Looking back to when I was an undergraduate at Berkeley three decades earlier, I had had a powerful transpersonal experience that left me with a strong sense of some kind of responsibility having something to do with Russia. Being born and raised Mormon, I naturally interpreted that meaning to be a proselytizing mission some day. I had perceived the responsibility as a burden. But now, I sensed the same message, not as responsibility but as *responsibility*—full of opportunity and joyful promise.

Nor did the experience stop there. Looking ahead, I did not anticipate that two decades later I would join a

daughter church of the Russian Orthodox Church that would enable me to integrate and transcend the Russian revolutionary tradition of my father and the Mormon pioneer tradition of my mother.

My thanks again to Kris, Matthew, and Kristine for sharing their own sacred encounters with the sacrament and its ability to transcend, even erase, barriers and distinctions.

*Eugene Kovalenko
Los Alamos, New Mexico*

Spirit Birth and “Chains of Belonging”

Samuel Brown’s scholarly article, “The Early Mormon Chain of Belonging,” (*Dialogue* 44, no. 1 [Spring 2011]: 1–52) provides a fascinating view of “the Great Chain of Being” that he describes as defining “the afterlife fate of believers” (3). According to Brown, the “chain of belonging” is comprised of “a hierarchy of power patterned on family relationships . . . one boundless family of eternal intelligences” (20, 27). However, the “family” pattern discussed by Brown is not actually familial. It is determined by mortal relationships that are welded by priesthood ordinances to create the “distinctive celestial family” (26). According to Doctrine and Covenants 128:18 (an epistle Joseph Smith wrote to the Saints in Nauvoo on September 6, 1842), a chain or “welding link of some kind or other” must be established “between the fathers and the children . . . from the days of Adam even to the present time,” which must be established through temple ordinance work (D&C 128:18).

Absent from Brown’s discussion, however, is a reference to a possible second genealogical pedigree (or “chain of belonging”) based upon the family organization we presumably experienced in the premortal world. While the original source of this premortal familial organization—whether it came from Joseph Smith¹ or was deduced by Church leaders immediately after his death,²—is controversial, its description includes exalted Heavenly Parents who create bodies for spirit children (“spirit birth”). This belief constitutes accepted LDS doctrine today.³

According to the spirit birth interpretation, as time and eternity progress, the spirit offspring, through obedience to celestial law, become exalted, thereby perpetuating procreative “rounds” that form endless generations of divinities. In contrast, Brown explains, “To [Joseph] Smith, in a way he never entirely worked out, the family of divinities had no end” (30). While it is true that our extant documents do not contain a Joseph Smith revelation of the complete theology of this belief, Brown implies that Joseph did not teach about spirit birth and therefore concludes that the mechanism through which an endless “family of divinities” is generated is unidentifiable and that the Prophet must have “never entirely worked out” the process.

In his article, Brown also describes unexalted beings as “neutered angels who would endure salvation” (26; see D&C 132:16–17). The term “neutered angels” seems to mean that they are sterile—incapable of producing offspring after the resurrection. Im-

plied also is that exalted individuals are not “neutered” and are therefore capable of creating progeny in the eternal worlds. However, without “spirit birth” as the mechanism of having children after the resurrection, it is unclear how exalted beings would be any different from unexalted “neutered angels.”

Brown quotes W. W. Phelps’s funeral sermon for Joseph and Hyrum Smith (32) but does not include Phelps’s comments in that sermon that speak of “multiplying and replenishing new worlds,” seemingly referring to spirit births of the crowned “faithful” after the resurrection. Phelps states: “The best of saints from many creations, will hold a grand jubilee, of prophets, priests and kings, with their wives, and children, for the purpose of crowning the faithful to enter into the joys of their Lord; prepar[a]tory to their going into eternity to multiply and replenish new worlds.”⁴

While some authors take the position that Joseph Smith did not teach of spirit birth, my review of available documents on this subject leads me to conclude that he did, in fact, teach this doctrine privately but avoided broaching the subject publicly.⁵ The evidence that Joseph actively taught it privately but not publicly is not conclusive; but if my conclusion is accurate, then three pedigrees or “chains of belonging” (or simply “chains”) can be identified: The first is a strict biological pedigree; the second is a genealogical pedigree of parent-children relations sealed through temple ordinances that is similar, but not identical to the biological pedigree because individuals may

be sealed to someone other than their biological parents. From a strict familial standpoint, both of these chains will be static and finite at the end of mortality, experiencing no increase thereafter. The third chain is a divine pedigree made of exalted beings (gods) who produce spirit offspring who progress to exaltation and have spirit children in the resurrection, thus producing an endless family of divinities.

If my interpretation regarding Joseph Smith’s teachings is accurate, all mortals are members of the first and third pedigrees and have the potential of being members of the second, which brings with it the possibility of enjoying an ever-expanding position in the third pedigree by obeying the gospel and attaining exaltation.

It appears that Brown’s “chain of belonging” possesses characteristics of all three of these pedigrees. It is based upon mortal family relations like chains 1 and 2. It is sealed through temple ordinance work (24) like chain 2. It can “increase” and be “enlarged” (26), a feature exclusive to chain 3. It allows for polygyny (25, 29) and is hierarchical (25, 30). What is unclear from Brown’s article is how an exalted member of the “chain of belonging” might fulfill Joseph Smith’s teachings in the King Follett Discourse about deification, a process by which an individual progresses to the status of our current Deity, a God empowered (with or without a spouse) to create a new “chain of belonging” on a newly created world through a process that does not include spirit birth.

Brown’s remarkable research and

writing style have provided an interesting and informative introduction to the “chain of belonging.” I would hope that these additional observations may prompt Brown or others to revisit this topic with additional insights.

Notes

1. For evidence that Joseph Smith taught “spirit birth,” see D&C 132:17, 19–20, 22, 24, 30, 55, 63; Franklin D. Richards, “Scriptural Items,” July 16, 1843, MS 4409, LDS Church History Library; George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 102; Stanley B. Kimball, ed., *On the Potter’s Wheel: The Diaries of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books/Smith Research Associates, 1987), 52; Orson Pratt, *Prophetic Almanac for 1845*, No. 1 (New York: The Prophet Office, 1844), 5–7; and Lorenzo Snow to “Elder Walker,” February 14, 1842, in Lorenzo Snow Notebook, typescript, 75–76, MS 2737 Box 1, fd. 1, LDS Church History Library.

2. Authors who have written that “spirit birth” may not have been taught during Joseph Smith’s lifetime include Charles R. Harrell, “*This Is My Doctrine*: The Development of Mormon Theology” (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011), 209–11; Van Hale, “The Origin of the Human Spirit in Early Mormon Thought,” in Gary James Bergera, ed., *Line upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 124; Blake T. Ostler, “The Idea of Pre-Existence in the Development of Mormon Thought,” *Dialogue* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 68.

3. See *The Family: A Proclamation to the World* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995); “God the Father,” in [no editor/compiler iden-

tified], *True to the Faith* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 74–76; *Gospel Principles*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009), 275, 277; *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine: Teacher’s Manual* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999), 110; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 257.

4. W. W. Phelps, “The Joseph/Hyrum Smith Funeral Sermon,” edited by Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker, *BYU Studies* 23, no. 1 (Winter 1983): 11–13.

5. See Brian C. Hales, “A Continuation of the Seeds’: Joseph Smith and Spirit Birth,” *Journal of Mormon History*, forthcoming.

Brian C. Hales
Layton, Utah

Brown Responds

I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to Brian Hales’s comment on my essay on the early Mormon Chain of Belonging. I hope to clarify my arguments in this brief response.

First, though, a disclaimer. There is a palpable hunger in much Mormon history to bring the figures of the past into harmony with our own sensibilities. I feel it myself, sometimes acutely. This hunger is manifest in generations of Saints attempting to conjure Smithian Mormonism through the later reminiscences that have reconstituted early Mormon history for many observers, including, in this case, Hales. In my historical writing, I have attempted to allow the actors of the past to disagree with their heirs

and with me, sometimes utterly. For that reason, in my research on earliest Mormonism, I have generally avoided the use of post-Smithian reminiscences.

I also try to keep my own devotional needs, insights, and impulses at arm's length when I write—not because I think my devotional concerns are invalid but because I believe that devotion is highly particular and dependent on a striving for accuracy in its historical and textual grounding. Separating history and devotion formally improves, I hope, both the history and the devotion.

My sense from reading Hales's letter is that echoes in later Mormon culture and theology may color the interpretation of the earliest documentary record in his analysis. That said, I must confess that I am likely guilty of such a sin myself and am ever grateful for feedback that directs me to improve the honesty and accuracy of my writing.

As I read his letter, Hales understands me to be arguing that novel relationships in the afterlife are excluded from my account of Smith's Chain of Belonging. I apologize that the exposition of this point in my "The Early Mormon Chain of Belonging" (44, no. 1 [Spring 2011]: 25–26) does not seem to have been sufficiently clear. I do believe that Smith anticipated the expansion of the Chain with new associations in the afterlife. Hales's interest in the traditional Mormon doctrine of "spirit birth" appears to have compounded my expository infelicities to leave him unclear about the substance of my argument.

Hales has merged two importantly distinct concepts. The first is whether

Smith's Chain of Belonging was generative, capable of further expansion in the afterlife. (It is, as we both agree.) The second is, mechanistically, how precisely is it generative? (Therein lies the rub.) Smith was suggestive but never explicit on the mechanistic question in reliable contemporary documentation. What is called "spirit birth" has historically been most popular and seems to originate largely (though not exclusively) with the Pratt brothers.

My review of the evidence (not explicitly engaged in the essay under question but covered in "Early Mormon Adoption Theology and the Mechanics of Salvation" (*Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 3 [Summer 2011]: 3–53) suggests that a sacerdotal adoptive model may be a compelling alternative. Jonathan Stapley and I jointly came to believe this was a possible account of divine parenthood around 2007, during our collaboration on early Mormon adoption theology. (See our co-authored observation in "Mormonism's Adoption Theology: An Introductory Statement," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 3 [Summer 2011]: 1–2). By this account, which is not crucial to my basic argument that Smith familiarized the *Scala Naturae*/Great Chain of Being, families may continue to expand in the afterlife through a kind of sacerdotal adoption rather than through the familiar physical processes of conception, gestation, and parturition.

In some respects the tension between "spirit birth" and sacerdotal adoption models of divine-human relating reflects a question of what the

metaphysical law of correspondence really means and entails. As the Pratts expounded spirit birth, they seem to have believed that the microcosm of earthly gestation and parturition defined the macrocosm of eternal increase. Their choice was not the only one available to the Saints after Joseph's death. There are several ways to connect microcosm to macrocosm, and the choice between human parturition and sacerdotal adoption is not inevitable. What I believe were the essential characteristics of the generative cosmos Joseph Smith revealed are a sacerdotal power known by various names (most durably "priesthood") and the creation of relationships among eternal beings at various stages of maturation and development. The earthly echoes of this grand, cosmic process are the saving rituals of the temple, inflected by the sacred experience of parenthood. The beauty and the power of Restoration teachings on the parenthood of God do not rely on the Pratt formulation.

Hales also objects to my employment of the metaphor of "neuter[ing]" to describe post-mortal beings who are not allowed to participate generatively in the Chain of Belonging. My choice of that term may have been ill advised, but I hope it is clear that a metaphoric "neutering" could apply equally to adoption and spirit birth.

Hales also objects to my suggestion that Joseph Smith did not fully explore the theological implications of his Chain of Belonging. I am grateful for the opportunity to clarify what I meant, though I do not want, then or now, to exhaust readers with blow-by-blow descriptions of the theological

controversies that have resulted as Latter-day Saints attempt to understand the implications of the Chain of Belonging. The questions of infinite regress, divine finitism, the existence of a universal Creator, the relationships between Adam and Elohim, and the identity of the God of the Hebrew Bible are still open for debate almost two centuries later; most of these controversies were reviewed by Sterling McMurrin several decades ago in his *Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1965), and a new generation of LDS philosophers and theologians continues to hash out the details, to good effect. Even had Smith been clear about spirit birth (versus sacerdotal adoption), this would not change the fact that Smith did not systematize the theological implications of his Chain of Belonging.

The trifurcate view apparently proposed in Hales's letter, in which Hales proposes mortal-biological, mortal-sacerdotal, and spirit-biological chains, unnecessarily complicates and unfortunately obfuscates the meaning of Smith's Chain of Being and the fundamental tensions inherent in the opposition of biological/genetic and sacerdotal/ecclesial families that Smith proposed. (I discuss these tensions in my *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2012], 216, 241–46, 302–4.) While there is a broad consensus favoring metaphysical and taxonomic trifurcations throughout the history of Western religion, I do not believe that such a triple classification is nec-

essary or illuminating in the present case. For the earliest Latter-day Saints, there was one Chain, which spanned mortality and immortality, biology and sacerdotalism. While biological kin were the most natural initial candidates for inclusion, there could be no lasting relationships that were not validated (sealed) by the priesthood power animating the temple. To propose parallel chains would downplay the importance of the tensions that existed between usual human affections (which are generally, at least in Western cultures, tied to biological and affinal kin) and the sacerdotal associations that constituted the Chain of Belonging, while also eliding the central unity of mortal and post-mortal life within early Mormonism.

I hope that Hales's request for clarification will be met by my *In Heaven as It Is on Earth*, which contextualizes adoption theology and the Chain of Belonging within the Mormon Prophet's quest to solve the problems of death. I wish him all good fortune in his ongoing research and writing.

Samuel M. Brown
Salt Lake City

Response to Bradshaw Review

While I welcome legitimate criticisms and opinions based on different worldviews, I must interpret the review of my book, *Encouraging Heterosexuality: Helping Children Develop a Traditional Sexual Orientation* (co-authored with A. Dean Byrd [Orem, Utah: Millennial Press, 2009]) by William Bradshaw in "Short Shrift to the Facts," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 171–

91, more as a personal attack on the authors than as a scholarly debate about the scientific evidence.

During the five years I worked on this book, I reviewed more than three hundred journal articles and dozens of academic books. In addition, I studied the words of Latter-day Saint prophets and apostles. I prayed and fasted many times that I would do an accurate and informative exposé on the topic. The manuscript was reviewed by eight different Ph.D. students and professors in psychology, education, and family studies whose comments and critiques I carefully considered. Dean Byrd joined me during the last year of writing, helped to edit the book, and added his comments. I was not acquainted with him until I sought his assistance.

While it is difficult to respond to all of Bradshaw's concerns, I will attempt to address eight major ones.

1. I directed the book to a lay audience; hence the lay language and simplified interpretations (instead of scientific terminology) used throughout the book. Bradshaw objects to this simplification, but I believe our generalizations are accurate and supported by scientific data.

2. I combined scientific data with religious doctrine, which is an uncommon practice in academia; but in my worldview, revelation is a source of truth, just as scientific methods provide us with other facts.

3. Bradshaw suggests that we should not identify the sexual orientation of the major researchers on homosexuality. With 2–4 percent of the population identifying as homosexual, perhaps as much as 50 percent of

the research is conducted by scientists who are homosexual.¹ Such men and women have a vested interest in the results of their research so bias could be a problem.

4. I stated clearly that homosexuality results from some combination of nature and nurture, and that Bradshaw's simple biological theory has not been substantiated. I offer research that supports a variety of factors which may be involved, concluding that the research supports neither a simple biological theory nor a simple psychological theory. Ultimately, all behavior has a biological substrate, but I conclude that the current research supports the polygenic, multifactorial genesis of homosexuality. I don't discount biological factors; rather I simply conclude that, based on current research, biological factors alone are insufficient to explain the genesis of homosexuality.

After years of supporting a simple biological theory of homosexuality, the American Psychological Association leaders reviewed the research and concluded: "Although much research has examined the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors." Further, they offer a scholarly consensus: Most scientists think that nature and nurture both play complex roles.² This view is consistent with the view expressed in our book; but it's at odds with Bradshaw's biological view.

Three basic studies led the media and others to trumpet the notion that

homosexuality is biologically determined. These studies were conducted by Simon LeVay, Dean Hamer, and the research team of Michael Bailey and Richard Pillard. At the time of his research, LeVay was a biological research scientist at the Salk Institute in San Diego. He conducted research on the brains of two groups of men: homosexual men and men who LeVay presumed were heterosexual. With a fairly small sample size (nineteen homosexual men and sixteen presumed heterosexual men), LeVay conducted a postmortem analysis, focusing on a particular cluster of cells in the hypothalamus known as the INAH-3. He reported that he had found "subtle but significant differences" between the brains of homosexual men and the brains of heterosexual men.

LeVay's research had a number of important limitations. (1) He had very little information about the sexual histories of the research participants. (2) Most of the subjects died of AIDs and the disease itself could account for the differences in brain tissue size. (3) Although there were differences between the groups, some presumed heterosexual men had small brain nuclei in the critical area, and some homosexual men had nuclei large enough to be within the normal heterosexual range. LeVay offered the following interpretation of his own research: "It is important to stress several limitations of the study. First the observations were made on adults who had already been sexually active for a number of years. To make a really compelling case, one would have to show that

these neuroanatomical differences existed early in life—preferably at birth. Without such data, there is always at least the theoretical possibility that the structural differences are actually the result of differences in sexual behavior—perhaps the ‘use it or lose it’ principle. Furthermore, even if the differences in the hypothalamus arise before birth, they might still come about from a variety of causes, including genetic differences, differences in stress exposure, and many others. It is possible that the development of the INAH-3 (and perhaps other brain regions) represent a ‘final common path’ in the determination of sexual orientation, a path to which innumerable factors may contribute.”³

Further, LeVay summarized his research in the following way: “It’s important to stress what I didn’t find. I did not prove that homosexuality was genetic, or find a genetic cause for being gay. I didn’t show that gay men are born that way, the most common mistake people make in interpreting my work. Nor did I locate a gay center in the brain.”⁴

From this summary, it appears that Bradshaw is making the common mistake referenced by LeVay— an acceptable mistake by the lay public but an inexcusable mistake by a professional. Perhaps even more significant are the additional comments offered by LeVay in his book, *Queer Science*: “No one even remembers being born, let alone being born gay or straight. When a gay man, for example says he was born gay, he generally means that he felt different from other boys at the earliest age he can remember. Sometimes the differences involved sexual

feelings, but more commonly it involved some kind of gender-nonconformist or ‘sex-atypical’ traits—disliking rough and tumble play for example—that were not explicitly sexual. These differences, which have been verified in a number of ways, suggest that sexual orientation is influenced by factors operating very early in life, but these factors could still consist of environmental factors such as parental treatment in the early post-natal period.”⁵

Michael Bailey and Richard Pillard studied identical twins and found a 52 percent concordance rate, which means that, for every homosexual twin, the chances are about 50 percent that his twin will also be homosexual.⁶ The most fascinating question, however, is this: If something in the genetic code made an individual homosexual, why did all the identical twins not become homosexual, since identical twins have the same genetic endowment?

Bailey himself acknowledged a probable selection bias since he recruited in venues where participants considered the sexual orientation of their twin before agreeing to participate in his study.⁷

Bailey and Pillard conducted a second study using the Australian Twin Registry, which had an anonymous response format that significantly reduced the risk of such bias. From that study, Bailey and Pillard reported a concordance rate of 20 percent to 37.5 percent depending on how loosely one defined “homosexuality.”⁸ Bailey’s first study received a great deal of media coverage; his second study received almost no press.

Other studies in Scandinavian countries have reported concordance rates below 20 percent.⁹

The third and final study was heralded by the media as the discovery of the “gay gene.” Dean Hamer and his group attempted to link male homosexuality to a stretch of DNA located at the tip of the X chromosome, the chromosome that some men inherit from their mothers. In his study, Hamer examined forty pairs of non-identical twin gay brothers, and asserted that thirty-three pairs—a number significantly higher than the twenty pairs that chance would dictate—had inherited the same X-linked genetic markers from their mothers.¹⁰

Criticism of Hamer’s research came from a surprising source: Dr. Neil Risch and colleagues at Yale University School of Medicine invented the method used by Hamer. Risch commented, “Hamer et al. suggest that their results are consistent with X-linkage because maternal uncles have a higher rate of homosexual orientation than paternal uncles, and cousins related through a maternal aunt have a higher rate than other types of cousins. However, neither of these differences is statistically significant.”¹¹

From Dean Hamer and his colleagues: “We knew that genes were only part of the answer. We assumed the environment also played a role in sexual orientation, as it does in most if not all behaviors.”¹² They further noted: “Homosexuality is not purely genetic.” Environment plays a role. There is not a single master gene that makes people gay: “I don’t think that we will ever be able to predict who will

be gay.”¹³ Citing the failure of this research, Hamer and Peter Copeland concluded, “The pedigree study failed to produce what we originally hoped to find: simple Mendelian inheritance. In fact, we never found a single family in which homosexuality was distributed in the obvious sort of pattern that Mendel observed in his pea plants.”¹⁴

What is even more intriguing is that when George Rice and his associates replicated Hamer’s study with more robust methodology, the genetic markers were found to be insignificant. Rice and his fellow researchers concluded: “It is unclear why our results are so discrepant from Hamer’s original study. Because our study was larger than that of Hamer et al.’s, we certainly had adequate power to detect a genetic effect as large as reported in that study. Nonetheless, our data do not support the presence of a gene of large effect influencing sexual orientation at position XQ 28.”¹⁵

Further, when asked by Anastasia Toufexis, a *Time* reporter, whether his theory ruled out social and psychological factors, Hamer’s response was: “Absolutely not. . . . From twin studies we already know that half or more of the variability in sexual orientation is not inherited. Our studies try to pinpoint the genetic factors, not to negate the psychosocial factors.”¹⁶ Thus, Bradshaw’s opinion that homosexuality is primarily biologically based has little support in the research literature.

5. Bradshaw takes issue with my description of DNA. He says that his detailed criticism “should not be dismissed as academic nitpicking” but

describes the passage in question as “written by someone who is uninformed about the basics of the subject. Most importantly, however, none of this detail is necessary—although the authors allege that it is—for a reader to judge the validity of the concept that sexual orientation has its roots in biology” (Bradshaw, 174). I disagree. The book was written for the lay audience, not a scientific audience. Our explanation is accurate and similar summaries can be found in many biology books. I claim there is no gay gene that forces a person to be homosexual and this is the consensus of the scientific community. Dr. Francis Collins, former head of the Human Genome project states: “Sexual orientation is genetically influenced but not hardwired by DNA, and . . . whatever genes are involved represent predispositions, not pre-determinations.”¹⁷

6. Most disturbing is the following quote from Bradshaw: “Abbott and Byrd attempt to deal with the question of the genetic basis for sexual orientation, not by citing published research as evidence, but by offering quotations from four scientists (two geneticists and two psychologists), none of whom have published the results of laboratory or other work directly bearing on the question” (Bradshaw, 175). Assuming that Bradshaw is referring to William Byne and Bruce Parsons as well as to Richard Friedman and Jennifer Downey, he has grossly misrepresented their credentials and experience.

Both Byne and Parsons have M.D.s and Ph.D.s in neuroscience and immaculate reputations. Byne, in particular, is a stellar scientist. He is the director of the Laboratory of Neuro-

anatomy and Morphometrics at Mount Sinai School of Medicine; he also serves on the editorial boards of both the *Journal of Homosexuality* and the *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy*. Both of these physician-scientists have outstanding credentials. Byne and Parsons’s review of human sexual orientation was published in the prestigious *Archives of General Psychiatry*, in which they offered the following conclusion: “Recent studies postulate biologic factors as the primary basis for sexual orientation. However, there is no evidence at present to substantiate a biologic theory, just as there is no compelling evidence to support any singular psychosocial explanation. While all behavior must have an ultimate biologic substrate, the appeal of current biologic explanations for sexual orientation may derive more from dissatisfaction with the present status of psychosocial explanations than from a substantiating body of experimental data. Critical review shows the evidence favoring a biologic theory to be lacking. In an alternative model, temperamental and personality traits interact with the familial and social milieu as the individual’s sexuality emerges.”¹⁸

In this exceptional review, Byne and Parsons further note, “Conspicuously absent from most theorizing on the origins of sexual orientation is an active role of the individual in constructing his or her identity.”¹⁹

Richard Friedman and Jennifer Downey are both M.D.s and research scientists. They have academic appointments at Cornell and Columbia Universities respectively in the medi-

cal schools. Friedman and Downey authored a review very similar to that of Byne and Parson, published in the *Journal of Neuropsychiatry* and arrived at a conclusion that is remarkably similar to Byne and Parsons' (and to ours): "The authors conclude that human sexual orientation is complex and diversely experienced and that a biopsychosocial model best fits the evidence."²⁰

In their premier text *Sexual Orientation and Psychoanalysis: Sexual Science and Clinical Practice*, Friedman and Downey state: "At clinical conferences one often hears discussants commenting that homosexuality is genetic, and, therefore, that homosexual orientation is fixed and unmodifiable. Neither assertion is true."²¹ . . . The assertion that homosexuality is genetic is so reductionistic that it must be dismissed out of hand as a general principle of psychology."²² In this forum and others, Bradshaw continues to offer his simplistic biological view of the genesis of homosexuality.

7. Bradshaw's review of the research on childhood sexual abuse (CSA) and homosexuality is inaccurate. First, he lists George Rekers as a neuropsychiatrist (Bradshaw, 180). He is not. Rekers is a clinical psychologist and is perhaps the most prominent "reparative" or change therapist in the nation. I personally contacted Rekers, and he was fully supportive of our interpretation of his research. He deemed that Bradshaw had grossly distorted his findings regarding CSA and later homosexuality.²³

Regarding the effects of sexual abuse, Rekers cites, as I do, the Shrier and Johnson studies and the Fink-

elhor survey research among others.²⁴ Focusing on the Van Wyk and Geist published research, Rekers emphasizes their conclusion that "learning through experience seems to be an important pathway to later sexual preference."²⁵ Among the experiences cited were being masturbated by another male.²⁶ Rekers referred us to peer-reviewed research in the *St. Thomas Law Review* and his *Handbook of Child and Adolescent Sexual Problems*.²⁷ Rekers in his *St. Thomas Law Review* article concluded, "Child sexual abuse is frequently not reported to the authorities because many, if not most, homosexually-abused boys are reluctant to report the sexual molestation because it implies to them that they are nor normal."²⁸

In 2005 Rekers articulated, in much the same way that we have, the research on child sexual abuse and later homosexuality, noting that a substantial proportion of individuals who later identify as homosexual experience some form of sexual abuse or exploitation.²⁹

I, like Rekers, agree that such data are correlational and cannot establish cause and effect. Jones and Yarhouse, like Rekers, summarized the research on CSA and homosexuality, and their interpretations and conclusions are remarkably similar to ours. Citing one major study, Jones and Yarhouse noted the following: "Experience of sexual abuse as a child, in other words, more than tripled the likelihood of later reporting homosexual orientation."³⁰

Perhaps the most disturbing of Bradshaw's commentaries on child sexual abuse was his interpretation

and dismissal of the sexual abuse experienced by Olympic diver Greg Louganis. The Louganis book offers a narrative about a young adolescent boy who has sex with a known perpetrator who is the age of the young boy's father.³¹ Consider Louganis's description of his perpetrator: "At some point he told me that he was concerned about seeing me because I was under eighteen. Apparently, he'd been jailed in the past for picking up minors."³²

Bradshaw's misinterpretation of the Tomeo et al. research is equally disturbing. Bradshaw cites personal contact with Don Templer (Bradshaw, 183) so he must have known of Templer's new study on child sexual abuse and homosexuality which has direct relevance to this topic. In this new study, Steed and Templer summarize: "The present study extends the research of Tomeo, Templer, Anderson, and Kotler. They found that 56% of gay men in contrast to 7% of heterosexual men, and 22% of lesbian women in contrast to 1% of heterosexual women, had reported homosexual molestation. Previous research also reported a history of molestation."³³

Templer summarizes his research in a way that is very compatible with our interpretation. Further, in this new study, Steed and Templer concluded that individuals who were homosexually molested were more apt to indicate that the molestation had an effect on their sexual orientation than those who were heterosexually molested.³⁴

It's clear that, on the issues regarding sexual abuse, Bradshaw is outside the boundaries of his "expertise." And

his interpretation or misinterpretation of the literature is reflected in his serious misunderstandings of harm caused by the sexual abuse of children.

The above comments call attention to just a few examples of Bradshaw's carelessness—dismissal of qualified researchers who have published in peer-reviewed journals, omission of research studies, and distortions of what the research can and cannot say about homosexuality.

8. Bradshaw takes issue with my belief that some individuals with unwanted same-sex attraction can be helped (Bradshaw, 187). I support the freedom of individuals to seek psychological care for any distress, including the distress of unwanted sexual attractions. Perhaps Bradshaw is unaware of the current psychiatric text, *Essential Psychopathology* and its view of psychological care for those distressed by unwanted homosexuality: "While many mental health care providers and professional associations have expressed considerable skepticism that sexual orientation could be changed with psychotherapy and also assumed that therapeutic attempts at reorientation would produce harm, recent empirical evidence demonstrates that homosexual orientation can indeed be therapeutically changed in motivated clients, and that reorientation therapies do not produce emotional harm when attempted."³⁵ Certainly, Bradshaw's views and opinions are at odds with this highly regarded, perhaps most authoritative, psychiatric textbook in the nation.

In conclusion, I believe that

Bradshaw's negative review of my book amounts to an attack and that it was both inaccurate and inflammatory. He says: "By taking the position that homosexuality is a chosen and changeable condition, Abbott and Byrd have written a dangerous publication that is likely to be harmful to families with gay and lesbian children" (Bradshaw, 189). He is wrong. This book provides help for those who want to diminish or eliminate their homosexual attraction and make changes in their lives. Those with unwanted same-sex attraction should be recognized and enabled to bring their lives back in harmony with God's commandments.³⁶

Notes

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32. Louganis and Marcus, *Breaking the Surface*, 133.
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Douglas A. Abbott
Lincoln, Nebraska

Bradshaw Replies

Some of Douglas Abbott's criticisms of my review of his book (*Encouraging Heterosexuality: Helping Children Develop a Traditional Sexual Orientation*, re-

viewed 43, no. 4 [Winter 2010]: 171–91), co-authored with Dean Byrd, merit a response; some do not. I will attempt to address the former in ways that permit *Dialogue* readers to judge the validity of the arguments.

With regard to bias. No one who conducts an empirical investigation in or out of science begins on completely neutral ground. We all begin with a certain point of view; the questions we ask reflect a particular perspective. Is the work of a Harvard biologist suspect because he refocused his research on the development of the pancreas on learning that his child was afflicted with Type I diabetes? What is disturbing is Abbott's implicit suggestion that LGBT investigators exploring an aspect of homosexuality are incapable of honesty and that their work is therefore not trustworthy. "Let him who is without bias cast the first stone."

With regard to cause. Please note Abbott's model and his strategy for defending it: There can be a role for biology ("I don't discount biological factors")—but not really. "Please note that when we use the term *genes* as a contributing factor we are not referring to biology as a direct, causative agent in homosexuality. When we say genes we mean genetically based physical or personality traits that may influence a person's temperament and social interaction. This could in turn lead to opportunities for homosexual socialization and interaction. Genes are NOT posited to be a direct cause of homosexual behavior" (*Encouraging Heterosexuality*, 49). Though "causes are difficult to find and to prove absolutely," "contributing actors have been identified such as poor parent-child re-

lationships and sexual abuse" (*Encouraging Heterosexuality*, p. 34). That's the model.

The strategy, then, is to attempt to discredit high-profile scientific studies by parading the tired inaccuracies that Dean Byrd has employed repeatedly over the years. First, Simon LeVay's observation that a collection of neurons in the hypothalamus (INAH-3) is larger in heterosexual men than in straight women or gay men is valid. It has been confirmed in the laboratory of William Byne, who also showed that this difference in the brain could not be attributed to the presence of HIV AIDS. It is time for responsible individuals to stop denying this reality. The irony here is that this is the same Byne whose credentials Abbott applauds in his letter and whose 1993 review article Abbott holds up as *the* source for evaluating homosexuality research. Readers are free, like Abbott and Byrd, to accept Byne's appraisal of the state of the art in 1993 as currently applicable, thus ignoring the enormous body of research data that has accumulated in the nineteen years since then.

Second, Dean Hamer twice found evidence that one of the responsible genes might be found on the X chromosome. The Canadian group (Rice) was not able to replicate his findings. This does not mean that there is no such gene on that chromosome or that other relevant genes are not located elsewhere. It means that finding the genes that influence sexual orientation is hard.

Third, the twin studies. The various international studies share the common factor of demonstrating a strong

genetic component to homosexuality. Why, then, are some pairs of identical twins discordant for sexual orientation? Environment? If so, does environment mean "poor parenting and sexual abuse"?

Please endure a brief biology lesson. A chromosome consists of a molecule of DNA, one very, very long double helix. But that's not all. The DNA is packaged in a structural complex with aggregates of proteins (histones). The whole assembly is called chromatin. The histones in chromatin tend to prevent the genes (linear units of biochemical information) in the chromosome from being expressed. When a gene is expressed, the information in DNA is processed by complicated mechanisms, the end result of which is the production of proteins. Think insulin, hemoglobin, collagen, and the thousands of other biochemical "machines" that enable blood cells, heart cells, brain cells, etc., to perform their specialized functions.

This is a summary description, at the molecular level, of biology. (Apologies to my ecologist colleagues.) Steroid hormones (or lack thereof) change a person's reproductive physiology and romantic attractions; development of the brain results in left- or right-handedness and the fact that men and women (and gays and straights) differ in some aspects of hearing—all of these events have been preceded by the switching on or off of genes. Biological factors are ultimately genetic factors. There is no meaningful distinction.

So with regard to sexual orientation, have the specific relevant genes been identified to date? No. Is it possi-

ble that the many demonstrated biological differences between LGBT and straight people could have resulted without the expression of genes? No. What do the most qualified and reputable geneticists see as the result of future research? "It is likely that such genes [controlling sexual orientation] will be found in the next few years," according to Francis S. Collins, current director of the National Institutes of Health.¹

Now, one more important concept. Pick out a cell from any two organs, brain and skin, for example. Compare the sequence of information in DNA between the two. They are identical. I repeat: identical. There is absolutely no difference between the two. That means brain genes are expressed (turned on) in brain cells and brain genes are turned off in skin cells. And so on. How is this differential regulation of gene function achieved? The responsible mechanisms are termed "epigenetic," meaning "on top of the genes." Epigenetic chemical modifications of both the DNA and the histones around which the DNA is wrapped can cause some genes to function and other genes to remain silent. Such regulatory events are responsible for what happens in an embryo—differentiating brain and skin.

With regard to sexual orientation, subtle variations in the timing, location (type of cell), or magnitude of these events in the brain are the likely explanation for why one man in an identical twin pair is straight, and his brother is gay. In this case, the "environmental" regulation of gene expression is not to be found in the ex-

ternal surroundings of an individual (temperature, diet, parental care, social interactions, etc.), but, instead, in the molecular interactions taking place internally, in the environment in which DNA finds itself in the nuclei of cells, in chromatin.

Simplifying science. To offer simplified explanations of complex phenomena is certainly laudable. But Abbott's description of the structure of DNA is not simplified, it's just wrong. In addition, I don't understand why there is uncertainty about the identity of the "two geneticists and two psychologists" cited in *Encouraging Heterosexuality* following the DNA discussion just mentioned. There they are (*Encouraging Heterosexuality*, 21–22): Collins, Lewontin, Stein, and Baker—not the others about whom Abbott feels he must guess.

In defense of his misreporting the data in a paper (Tomeo et al.) that he cited in *Encouraging Heterosexuality*, Abbott suggests that I should have acknowledged the work in another paper (Steed and Templar) by the same senior author, which he did not cite because it was published *after* his book was in print. The contention is that this new paper "is very compatible with our interpretation" that childhood sexual abuse is a causative factor in adult homosexuality.

Please note these important details. A single item that was employed in the Steed and Templar survey is relevant: "Do you believe that experience [sexual contact] has an impact on your sexual orientation?" These authors acknowledge the ambiguity inherent in this wording ("it is not known what various participants meant by 'im-

pact'"). They then list the possibilities: homosexuality would not have occurred absent the molestation, molestation accelerated an already emerging homosexual orientation, molestation had a non-sexual negative consequence; or the experience may have stimulated hypersexuality. Thus "*The reader is urged to use great caution regarding the making of cause-and-effect inferences.*"² How is it possible for Abbott to believe that he can accurately convey the significance of this paper by omitting mention of this crucial commentary by its authors?

It is more than a little curious that Abbott should introduce George Rekers into the conversation. Please note, first, that my complaint in the review was not about Reker's views, but about Abbott and Byrd's misquotation of his words; and second, he is listed at the University of South Carolina as a professor of neuropsychiatry.) This is the same George Rekers who gained widespread notoriety in May 2010 when he hired a male prostitute through Rentboy.com in Miami to accompany him on a trip to Europe. ("His function was to carry my luggage.") Rekers subsequently resigned his role as consultant and board member with NARTH. One's personal hypocrisy does not necessarily invalidate his professional work. But in this case Reker's behavior certainly invites the question of whether or not his vehement efforts to prevent adoption by LGBT couples, as one example of his anti-gay activism, are a reflection of the internal self-floathing of a gay man.

Readers who remain in doubt about any of the issues of fact or interpretation discussed above, or those not addressed (such as whether or not the sexual relationship that Greg Louganis had with an older man was the cause of his homosexuality) are invited to search the original documents for themselves. It will take some time and effort, but all are accessible awaiting the reader's independent judgment.

Regarding changing a person's sexual orientation. Indisputable evidence is accumulating that failure to realize the promises made by ecclesiastical leaders and reparative therapists that a change in sexual orientation is possible has had dire consequences for a large number of LGBT Latter-day Saints. Consider the impact on belief when years, even decades, of fervent pleadings with God, hyper-activity at church, accelerated efforts at personal righteousness, and therapeutic counseling do not change one's same-sex erotic attractions. How long can self-esteem remain intact in the face of this experience? When does one begin to conclude that he or she is not worthy before God, or that "God doesn't care," or that "God doesn't care about me," or that "maybe there's no God after all"? Many of our brothers and sisters, thankfully, adopt more rational goals. Others take their own lives.

And what of the spouses, who consciously or unknowingly entered into marriage with a gay husband or lesbian wife supposing that together they could succeed where others had failed? There had been assurances from authoritative sources: "After you're married, it will all work out." What happens when the homosexual

attractions remain, and the self-respect of those spouses is severely damaged by a sense of not being adequate, and once-unthinkable strains crack the relationship beyond the point when it can endure? What of the hurt? What of the heartache?

I say: Enough of empty promises. Acceptance, instead, of reasonable options that hold some hope for happiness.

Abbott's letter, rather than providing vindication of the claims of his book, is a perpetuation of its very serious flaws.

Notes

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William S. Bradshaw
Orem, Utah

Insider's Vantage Point

I was most gratified to read Armand L. Mauss's analysis of a cultural shift that I contribute to every day but rarely have the perspective to appreciate in a broader historical context. (See "Rethinking Retrenchment: Course Corrections in the Ongoing Campaign for Respectability," 44, no. 4 [Winter 2011]: 1-42.) My perspective is that of an external marketer at Bonneville Communications directly

with the Church on the “I’m a Mormon” campaign and Mormon.org.

From my insider’s vantage point, I believe I can build on Mauss’s study of our current assimilation by clarifying that it is the Missionary Department, not the Public Affairs Department, that is sponsoring and championing Mormon.org and the “I’m a Mormon” campaign. While this might seem an insignificant distinction for one not familiar with the Church’s institutional structure, it actually puts a finer point on Mauss’s proof that the institutional Church is broadly supporting assimilation. While Mauss is correct in identifying Public Affairs as the most “transparent” Church department engaged in the current outreach because of its direct and personable interaction with the popular media, it is not the only department to be praised as “proactive” or “expansive.”

There are, in fact, are a host of individuals and departments up to the top levels of the hierarchy who are producing and supporting media communications that more effectively and relevantly place Mormonism in the cultural conversation, and Mike Otterson’s visionary and capable leadership is a public extension of a broad-based emphasis. For instance, the Church’s media and technology departments, in partnership with my team, have just released an iPad app with interactive maps and information to support the Bible videos currently being filmed in Goshen, Utah. This unusually ecumenical “gift to the world” was conceived and produced completely apart from Public Affairs.

Additional projects such as the Mormon Messages videos (which have

recently used some very un-Mormony stylized animations), the Mormon.org Facebook page (which promoted a “Countdown to Christmas” series of artistic posts with no Church branding on them), and BYUtv (which recently launched a new lineup of shows with an extremely light institutional footprint) demonstrate a pervasive and proactive effort to represent ourselves with rhetoric, art, and imagery that resonate outside our own culture.

Mauss wonders aloud if these institutional nudgings are specifically intended to shift perceptibly our own internal culture as well as the general public’s understanding of who we are, or whether this self-reflection is merely an “unintended consequence” of defining ourselves so publicly. While not the primary motivation for projects coming out of the Missionary Department or any other Church department, awareness of the internal impact is always close to the surface of strategic conversations. The internal cultural tensions we are working out among ourselves are very much intended, even though Mauss assumes the “external image-making professionals” such as myself are not specifically tasked with such a shift.

I argue as a marketer that, although academia is where our thinkers capably work out what we believe in this era of assimilation, it is through externally asserting our definition of self that our people work out how we act on those beliefs. Even though Mauss cites in his conclusion a “discrepancy” between internal and external image-making, I say it is this “exaggerated impression” of our pub-

lic communication that shifts internally; thus, the two cannot and should not be so cleanly delineated.

Neylan McBaine
Salt Lake City

Post-Heterosexual Theology

Let me begin by outlining what does and does not motivate me in writing a response to Taylor Petrey's carefully executed, unmistakably informed, rightly concerned, and entirely productive essay, "Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology" (44, no. 4 [Winter 2011]: 106–44.)

I'm not particularly exercised—theologically or ethically—by the issue of homosexuality and the Church. I have read with interest most of the major publications on the question, but my interest has been and is driven by what most would call ancillary concerns. That said, I share Petrey's project in many ways—especially if his project is kept within the bounds set by the title of his piece. If the task is to get clear about divine embodiment, to sort out what's at stake in Joseph Smith's beautiful vision of sociality coupled with immortal glory, to determine what can be meant by the relatively recent idea of eternal gender, and to do all this by critiquing every crippling limitation of these concepts to a post-war American nuclear family life that has as often masked infidelity, abuse, and boredom as it has been the locus of genuine joy (post-heterosexual in that sense), then I couldn't be happier to take up with Petrey in the theological battle he announces in the article.

You see, for all Petrey says about

theologically envisioning the possibility of sealed homosexual relationships, he doesn't do any actual work on constructing a Mormon queer theory in his essay. He takes as his task, rather, just to clear the theological ground for the possibility of a Mormon queer theory, and that's worth doing—though for me that clearing of the ground serves other purposes. Of course, I'd be interested to see a well-done Mormon queer theory, but I've got no inclinations for or against it in advance. I'm just not particularly exercised by these questions.

So what exercises me? The Restoration—nailing down what's at stake in what I wish we wouldn't hesitate to call the truth of Mormonism. If that truth is—I would say: has always been—post-heterosexual (as I suspect it is and has been), then our theological work should reflect it. And so I welcome Petrey's work. But I want also to offer a point or two of criticism linked to three major issues of his article: the tensions it highlights, reproduction and sealing, and eternal gender.

There is a crucial tension in Petrey's essay, one that threatens—but only threatens—to unsettle the whole undertaking. This tension is most clearly on display in the essay's conclusion. Petrey says there: "The possibility of creating theological space within Mormonism for homosexual relationships rests not on the abandonment of any central doctrine of the Church, but rather on the revival of past concepts, the recovery of embedded theological resources, and the rearticulation of existing ideas in

more expansive terms in order to rethink the possibilities of celestial relationships" (128).

My heart beats to the rhythm of these words. But then Petrey goes on:

The numerous critiques of the category of gender in recent years cannot be ignored, even if Latter-day Saints opt for a continued emphasis on binary sexual difference. Whether from the critique of gender roles, gender essentialist notions of innate characteristics, or even the notion of biological difference itself, LDS theology faces serious credibility issues by continuing to hold to precritical assumptions about sexual difference. At the same time, however, there is nothing preventing Latter-day Saints from moving past these assumptions in order to more clearly focus on Mormonism's distinctive teachings about kinship and salvation, which does not require an appeal to the suspect category of gender at all. (129)

The rhythm seems suddenly off here. Petrey is unquestionably right that the category of gender as usually understood by Latter-day Saints is suspect, but to call for an abandonment of the idea of eternal gender is, quite precisely, to claim that there is need to abandon a central doctrine of the Church. This tension is crucial to critiquing "Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology." Is there a way to sort out the question of gender without simply "moving past" it? Are there "past concepts," "embedded theological resources," or "existing ideas" that can be drawn on to counter the "gender trouble" Petrey quite rightly identifies?

Petrey's article comes in three parts, each associated with one aspect of "the theological objection to homosexual relationships . . . in current LDS understandings of the afterlife and the kinds of relationships that will exist there" (108). The first section of the article tackles the question of "celestial reproduction," the second that of "sealings as kinship," the third that of "eternal gender." Before coming to gender, I want to say something about the first two sections of the essay, the sections where I think Petrey's work not only succeeds but shines.

The strategy Petrey employs in "Celestial Reproduction" is to produce a doctrinal *reductio ad absurdum*. He does this in two ways. First, he makes clear that there is no official account of the idea and that the several unofficial accounts are at best problematic (and at worst incoherent). Second and more provocatively, he turns to actual official sources (principally scripture) to show that there are accounts of divine creation, production, and even reproduction that provide an anything-but-heterosexually-reproductive picture of divine creation.

Everything Petrey does here is brilliant, and it is all something that has been needed for a long time—whether it is subsequently to be employed in constructing a Mormon queer theory or whether it is simply to be used to clarify what is at stake in divine embodiment and the basics of Mormon theology.

The strategy in "Sealings as Kinship" is different. Here Petrey takes up the role, not of the doctrinal stu-

dent of scripture, but of the historian. In a kind of Foucauldian gesture, he shows that the way Latter-day Saints currently think about the meaning of the sealing ordinance is anything but the only way it has been thought about in the relatively short history of Mormonism. He argues that current attitudes about the nuclear family derive from distinctly twentieth-century sources (sources most Latter-day Saints would cringe at!), and then goes on to describe how earlier generations of Latter-day Saints—with prophets leading the way—have conceived of what is at the heart of the sealing ordinances. Drawing on these historical sources, Petrey shows that the current interpretation prevailing in Mormon discourse is a remarkably narrow conception that misses the richness of Restoration—the richness that folks like Kathleen Flake, Jonathan Stapley, and Samuel Brown have been talking about in settings too far removed from everyday Mormons to receive the attention they deserve. Here, again, everything Petrey does is brilliant and revealing.

So far, then, so good. Everything in the first two parts of the essay see Petrey modeling precisely what he talks about in the beautiful words from his conclusion: “the revival of past concepts, the recovery of embedded theological resources, and the rearticulation of existing ideas in more expansive terms in order to rethink the possibilities of celestial relationships” (128). This is clearly what Petrey aims to do—even, I believe, in the last part of the essay, where the tension I’ve already mentioned begins to be felt.

Petrey starts out, I think, quite well in the third part of his essay on eternal

gender. He points out that Latter-day Saints—at least in official publications—use the word “gender” in a lazy way. The consequence is that it is used to refer to three distinct things all at once: “the morphological bodies of males and females,” “an ‘identity’ that males and females are supposed to possess,” and “different ‘roles,’ purposes, and responsibilities that some Church leaders understand to be assigned to males and females” (121).

That’s right. And Petrey is more than right to suggest that this sloppy usage is problematic. He’s right also when he goes on to point out: “When one adds the idea of gender as an eternal characteristic, these three definitions become even more complicated” (121). Even more complicated? Yes. But is that complication a bad thing, as I think Petrey implies? No. Or that, at any rate, is what I want to argue.

Now, before I take up my quibble, I want to make sure I’m not misunderstood. In arguing on behalf of eternal gender, I do not mean to suggest that there is *nothing* problematic with the way Latter-day Saints talk about gender. I entirely agree with Petrey that “LDS theology faces serious credibility issues by continuing to hold to precritical assumptions about sexual difference” (129). I offer no defense of natural or inherent sexual identity. My argument is rather that the theological gesture, made in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” concerning eternal gender, can be utilized as a theological resource against naturalism or inherentism, rather than being interpreted

as an attempt at securing naturalism or inherentism. And I want to claim further that the fully faithful tone Petrey strikes in the first two parts of his essay might only be sustainable in a critique of gender if eternal gender is taken as an existing idea to be rearticulated in more expansive terms and not as a theological *faux pas* to be abandoned.

Now, Petrey's discussion of gender in the third part of essay remains, it seems to me, within a classic polarity. Gender is either essential or constructed. He aligns the Latter-day Saint position—taken, he says, from the “semi-canonical 1995 document ‘The Family: A Proclamation to the World’” (p. 120)—with essentialism, and he positions himself on the side of constructivism. That wouldn't necessarily spell trouble in itself, except that Petrey goes on to claim, more implicitly than explicitly, that essentialism is always precritical. That simply isn't the case. There are sophisticated, critical essentialist positions (the work of Luce Irigaray comes naturally to mind), and it is more than possible—and perhaps worthwhile—to explore the compatibility of Mormon theology with such positions. Consequently, Petrey comes across as believing that constructivism, particularly as articulated by Judith Butler, has had the last—and only critical—say on gender. That, too, simply isn't the case.

It isn't the case in part because there are sophisticated and perhaps defensible essentialist positions. But it also isn't the case because there are positions one can take that break with the essentialist/constructivist polarity, something Petrey fails to acknowl-

edge. I'll cite just one name: Alain Badiou. Whatever one thinks of Badiou's work, he has unquestionably provided a position on gender that is neither essentialist nor constructivist, and I, for one, am convinced that it deserves the attention of Mormon theologians. In particular, I think Badiou's take on sexual difference deserves attention because it argues for a strong notion of eternal gender without falling into any of the confusions Petrey associates with the essentialist position.

Taking the Badiouian road in thinking about gender, one can affirm what has become a central Mormon doctrine (the eternal nature of gender) without having to argue problematically that gender is inherent or natural. In other words, Badiou points up a way of embracing claims about eternal gender without falling into the difficulty Petrey rightly assigns to most Mormon thinking about gender: “gender ‘identity’ cannot be both inherent and taught” (p. 124).

Thus, while it's crucial for Latter-day Saint theologians to move past precritical notions of gender—on this point Petrey is absolutely right, and he has my thanks for putting this point in print—to do so is not necessarily to move past gender essentialism, as Petrey seems to suggest, nor is it necessarily to settle into gender constructivism, as Petrey also seems to suggest.

My concern here is not that Petrey is a gender constructivist—though I'd certainly like to debate the merits of Butler and Badiou when he and I have some time to do so. My concern

is rather that his way of staging his predilection for gender constructivism ends up introducing into his work the tension I discussed earlier. It is quite as important in this third stretch of the post-heterosexual theological road as in the previous two stretches to sustain an unmistakably faithful tone. I worry, in other words, about Petrey's discussion of gender because it is there—and there alone—that some might accuse him of a kind of unfaithfulness.

I don't want Petrey to be accusable of such a thing, not only because I'm convinced that his motivations are indeed faithful, but also because I'm convinced that real headway on Mormonism's truth can only be made when the theologian's faithfulness can't be missed. (I'm thinking here of Elder Neal A. Maxwell's comment about Hugh Nibley in the documentary *Faith of an Observer*: "His commitment is so visible and has been so pronounced and so repetitively stated that that's not even the issue. So we get on to 'What is Hugh saying?'")

In conclusion, I believe, then, that I can travel the whole of Petrey's road with him, though I think I have a few animated words to share during the last leg of the journey—optimistic words, words in the spirit of his own instructive words during the first two legs of the journey. But at the end of "Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology," we come to a crossroad. I'm happy to see Petrey travel down the path of imagining positive possibilities for homosexual relationships within Mormon theology. Indeed, I'm eager to see what he discovers as he travels that way, and I hope he writes back with news. My own journey,

driven by other theological concerns, takes me down a different path, onto which I should hurry.

In the meanwhile, though, I'm more than happy to have had the company. And hopefully Petrey has been happy to have had mine as well.

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Schlock or Shock?

I enjoyed Michael Hicks's insights and interpretation of the Broadway musical, *The Book of Mormon*. (See Michael Hicks, "Elder Price Superstar," 44, no. 4 [Winter 2011]: 226–36.) However, I was surprised that he endorsed profanity as the language best suited for helping the masses understand what makes the Church tick and talk. He used his pious mother's one-word description of her failed marriage as an example of how "cursing is the most honest speech" (226). Actually, her one word, "shitty," conveys feeling, not honesty. If, instead, she had used a more precise, yet similarly pithy explanation, like, say, "abusive" or "unfaithful" or "alcoholic" or "boring," Hicks would have been much more enlightened about the marriage.

But profanity allows reason and understanding to hide behind surprise. That's because profanity is more inciteful (if that's a word) than insightful. It exclaims, not explains. And used often enough, it doesn't even do that, so those interested in shock and awe theatrics continually reach for new highs by plunging to new lows. For example, repetition long ago wore out the once mighty

meanings of “son of a bitch” and “bastard,” phrases that now dribble from the mouths of the angered, surprised, or amused rather than from dutiful genealogists.

Quite probably, the success of the play depends more on introducing new approaches to titillating jaded au-

diences than to the joy of its music. In short, the artists behind the staging of *The Book of Mormon* offered a skewed insight into most things Mormon by offsetting schlock with shock.

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