

# AFTER A POST-HETEROSEXUAL MORMON THEOLOGY: A TEN-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE

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Ten years ago, my article “Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology” was published in *Dialogue*.<sup>1</sup> I did not know what to expect when it made its way into the world, but it ended up being a widely discussed piece and has been accessed tens of thousands of times.<sup>2</sup> The public discussion about my ideas was both critical and appreciative. In the wake of the article, my own research and thinking have also developed. When I first approached this topic, I expected that my interest would be limited to a single contribution. However, in the ensuing decade I now count several articles, a book, and a substantial edited volume on Mormonism, sexuality, gender in my research portfolio. My fascination with this question has endured.

Other things are also different now than they were at the time I wrote the original article. Same-sex marriage is legal everywhere in the United States. The Church has engaged in multiple public campaigns related to LGBTQ issues, including pastoral outreach, updated

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1. Taylor G. Petrey, “Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 44, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 106–41.

2. The precise number is unknown because *Dialogue* has changed servers several times in this period. The article is now also available on JSTOR instead of just the *Dialogue* website. Finally, the article is a free PDF and may be sent electronically without any tracking analytics. However, in 2015, the *Dialogue* staff informed me that it had been downloaded more than 20,000 times.

policies, and a reframed political project on “religious freedom.” In the ensuing years, several other thinkers have approached this question of same-sex relationships and gender identity with theological and historical sophistication. Here, I want to discuss in retrospect the origins of “Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology,” the reception of the article, and the trajectory that my own work has taken. Despite all of these developments, the place of same-sex relationships in LDS thought and practice remains vexed.

### Origins and Main Ideas

I was just preparing to go on a mission when Gordon B. Hinckley presented “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” a guiding document on LDS teachings on marriage and public policy released just as the same-sex marriage issue had arisen in the United States. After I returned from my mission and to my university education in New York City, I became increasingly interested in feminist theory and the new approaches to sexuality and identity in the 1990s. While I was an undergraduate student, the Church had gotten involved in propositions to prohibit same-sex marriage in Hawaii, California, and Alaska. But being in New York City, it all seemed rather far away and I hadn’t really worked out how I wanted to approach this social question.

Heading to graduate school for a master’s degree in New Testament and Early Christianity in 2001, I was consumed with learning the languages and the history of scholarship in that field. When I was admitted into the doctoral program in that field, I began to take more coursework in gender and sexuality. My advisor, Karen L. King, was a leader in thinking about gender in early Christianity, and feminist icons like Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza loomed large in my program and in my own thinking. When Amy Hollywood arrived at Harvard, it opened up to me a whole new set of theories and approaches to identity, bodies, and desire. As I started writing my dissertation on how early Christians imagined sexuality and desire in the resurrection body, I

turned to feminist theory, especially that of Judith Butler, to help me articulate the issues at stake in these debates.

Meanwhile, Latter-day Saints were engaged in a substantive and contentious exchange about same-sex relationships in the first decade of the 2000s. I closely followed the topic in Mormon blogging, which had attracted a number of rising intellectuals in their twenties and thirties. Of course, the Massachusetts Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage in 2004, accelerating the issue in the United States. But the Church had done quite little to mobilize in Massachusetts. That helped to defer the question for me. However, when the Church formally announced that it would organize to oppose Prop 8 in California in 2008, I found myself deeply torn. By coincidence, I was scheduled to preach at Harvard Divinity School in an LDS-run service at the start of the new term in January 2009, after the election. Early protests had occurred against Latter-day Saints around the country, and I was feeling some dread about how to navigate the issue with my colleagues. I spoke from the heart about my conflicted feelings. The publications director for the *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* was there and asked to publish my remarks, titled “An Uncomfortable Mormon.”<sup>3</sup>

My discomfort increasingly turned to a set of theoretical problems. I recall two pieces that had an impact on me in the year after the 2008 election. The first was by Valerie Hudson Cassler, at the time a well-respected political science professor at Brigham Young University, titled “‘Some Things That Should Not Have Been Forgotten Were Lost’: The Pro-Feminist, Pro-Democracy, Pro-Peace Case for State Privileging of Companionate Heterosexual Monogamous Marriage.”<sup>4</sup> This was at the

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3. Taylor G. Petrey, “An Uncomfortable Mormon,” *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 37, no. 2–3 (Spring/Summer 2009): 14–16.

4. V. H. Cassler, “‘Some Things That Should Not Have Been Forgotten Were Lost’: The Pro-Feminist, Pro-Democracy, Pro-Peace Case for State Privileging of Companionate Heterosexual Monogamous Marriage,” *SquareTwo* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2009), <http://squaretwo.org/Sq2ArticleCasslerMarriage.html>.

time hailed as the most significant, substantive LDS argument opposing same-sex marriage on putatively feminist grounds.<sup>5</sup> I remember having a strong reaction to this piece and feeling deeply concerned about the oppositional framework between feminism and LGBTQ rights.

The second piece was Judith Butler's short book *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*.<sup>6</sup> Based on a series of lectures she had given, Butler addressed the question of kinship in queer contexts. I distinctly remember this book hitting me like a lightning bolt, and I rushed to grab a piece of paper to sketch out the outline for an article that would see same-sex marriage as claim about kinship, suddenly an obvious argument that I had not yet understood in my focus on gender and sexuality. For me, this realization was a potent reframing of same-sex marriage that had been analyzed as a legal or sociological issue, or even a question about sexual ethics. Kinship, for me, unlocked a whole new framework for a new theological imaginary.

The sketch for the article that I put together was extremely compressed. It was just the stub of what would eventually become "Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology," but I contacted Kristine Haglund, then editor at *Dialogue*, to see if she thought it had any merit. She kindly sent it out for review, which came back confirming that it was underdeveloped. I'd written it rather half-heartedly, hoping someone else would flesh out my own idea to more productive ends. My reluctance to complete my thought was in part because I was getting ready to graduate from my doctoral program and in search of a job in biblical studies—an extreme rarity for Latter-day Saints. I didn't want to start establishing a Mormon studies publication record at that

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5. Julie M. Smith praised it: "For the first time ever, I've read a defense of the anti-same-sex-marriage movement that didn't make me cringe." In "Thank you, Valerie Hudson," *Times and Seasons*, Apr. 15, 2009, <https://www.timesandseasons.org/harchive/2009/04/thank-you-valerie-hudson/>.

6. Judith Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

stage in my career. In any case, the reviewers and Haglund asked me to fill in the outline. Going on the job market, the birth of my second child, a move to start a new job, and other events delayed the revisions for about a year. The delay allowed me to do more reading, benefiting especially from new research on early Mormon kinship that further confirmed for me that this was a necessary starting point for a theological redescription.<sup>7</sup>

I recall feeling that I was breaking some new ground, though I was building on decades of previous work. While I think “Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology” marks a distinctive theoretical turn, scholars and activists had been organizing, writing, blogging, and speaking about these issues for years. D. Michael Quinn and Connell O’Donovan had approached the issue from a historical perspective, chronicling episodes and changes to LDS teachings.<sup>8</sup> Other scholars

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7. Samuel M. Brown, “The Early Mormon Chain of Belonging,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 1–52; Samuel M. Brown, “Early Mormon Adoption Theology and the Mechanics of Salvation,” *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 3–52; Jonathan A. Stapley, “Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism,” *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 53–117.

8. Connell “Rocky” O’Donovan, “‘The Abominable and Detestable Crime against Nature’: A Revised History of Homosexuality and Mormonism, 1840–1980,” Connell O’Donovan (website), last revised 2004, <http://www.connellodonovan.com/abom.html>. See the shorter version, O’Donovan, “‘The Abominable and Detestable Crime Against Nature’: A Brief History of Homosexuality and Mormonism, 1840–1980,” in *Multiply and Replenish: Mormon Essays on Sex and Family*, edited by Brett Corcoran (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 123–70; D. Michael Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics in Nineteenth-Century America: A Mormon Example* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); D. Michael Quinn, “Male-Male Intimacy Among Nineteenth-Century Mormons: A Case Study,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 28, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 105–28; D. Michael Quinn, “Prelude to the National ‘Defense of Marriage’ Campaign: Civil Discrimination Against Feared or Despised Minorities,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 1–52. See also, Armand Mauss, “A Reply to Quinn,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 53–65.

were looking at the question of sexual ethics.<sup>9</sup> The causes or etiology of homosexuality often took special prominence.<sup>10</sup> Others had attempted to carve out some ecclesiastical space for affirming same-sex relationships.<sup>11</sup> Many of these texts and others focused on pastoral concerns about damage to LGBTQ members.<sup>12</sup> Some of the analysis focused on the reputational damage to straight Latter-day Saints by holding on to anti-homosexuality teachings.<sup>13</sup> Others provided an analysis of the legal and social scientific debates.<sup>14</sup>

All of these made major contributions, but I still felt that the ground of the analysis needed to shift. Much of the discussion focused on homosexuality as a set of desires or analyzed the morality of certain

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9. Wayne Schow, "Sexuality Morality Revisited," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 37, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 114–36; Eric Swedin, "'One Flesh': A Historical Overview of Latter-day Saint Sexuality and Psychology," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 31, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 1–29.

10. R. Jan Stout "Sin and Sexuality: Psychobiology and the Development of Homosexuality," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 29–41; William S. Bradshaw, "Short Shrift to the Facts," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 171–91.

11. Gary M. Watts, "The Logical Next Step: Affirming Same-Sex Relationships," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 31, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 49–57.

12. Carol Lynn Pearson, *No More Goodbyes: Circling the Wagons around Our Gay Loved Ones* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Pivot Point Books, 2007); Fred Matis, Marilyn Matis, and Ty Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation: Understanding the Challenge of Same-Gender Attraction* (Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, an imprint of Deseret Book, 2004). Ron Schow, Wayne Schow, and Marybeth Raynes, eds., *Peculiar People: Mormons and Same-Sex Orientation* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991).

13. Armand Mauss, "Mormonism in the Twenty-First Century: Marketing for Miracles," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 236–49.

14. Randolph Muhlestein, "The Case Against Same-Sex Marriage," and Wayne Schow, "The Case for Same-Sex Marriage: Reply to Randolph Muhlestein," both in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 40, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 1–67.

sexual acts. I came to believe that the act/desires distinction was not especially useful. The framing of the question as a debate about desires and acts seems to concede the very terms that had been developed in anti-homosexuality culture—seeing “homosexuality” as primarily about “sexuality.” By contrast, male-female relationships occupied a larger conceptual footprint that had built into itself institutional acknowledgment of relationships that were fuller than their sexual dimension. In other words, I wanted to consider relationships and kinship as the potential theological desideratum and saving principle in a post-heterosexual theology, not the kind of sex that people were having.

Second, it seemed to me that there were deep, structural issues in Mormon theology as it had developed that made it difficult to accommodate same-sex relationships. Answering the “clobber texts” or other apologetic or historical engagements seemed wholly insufficient because they did not address the deep ways that heterosexual supremacy had been braided into the Mormon cosmos. The question of sexual morality, or the etiology of homosexuality, or respectability did not address head on the presumed heterosexual reproductivity of the Mormon heavens. Legal or social scientific analysis of the effects of same-sex marriage did little to address the theological questions about reproduction. I wanted to question the received wisdom that reproduction and Mormonism were inseparably intertwined by examining the theological foundations of the idea as it had emerged in recent decades. The first part of my article then interrogated “celestial reproduction” as a supposedly essential feature of Mormon theology. I argued that the evidence for it was quite weak, that there were alternative modes of reproduction not rooted in heterosexuality in the tradition, and that adoption was a well-established theological and social practice in Mormonism that replaced biological kinship.

The next major idea of the paper was a brief history of LDS teachings on kinship and the sealing ordinance. Both historically and today, sealing was not rooted in reproduction but was instead a way of ritually

marking kinship as opposed to the biological, nuclear family. Here too I attempted to displace “sexuality” as the defining feature of sealing and instead pointed to care, commitment, and covenant as a potential route for including non-heterosexual relationships. I further suggested that centering heterosexuality in LDS kinship practices was bound to conflict with a wide variety of global and historical kinship practices. Kinship rather than sexuality would accommodate a wider array of historical and contemporary relationships.

Finally, it seemed to me that some critical analysis of LDS ideas of “eternal gender” was a necessary part of this question, for the ways that it was used against both same-sex relationships and transgender identity. I came to see the link between sex and gender, and sexuality and gender identity, as an inevitable part of a post-heterosexual theology. LDS concepts of heterosexuality were intimately rooted in theories of sexual difference. They not only affirmed the existence of two separate sex/genders but also were based on complementarian notions of their interdependence. Such views upheld male-female relationships as superior to others because they were somehow more balanced or complete. I wanted to examine how Latter-day Saints defined “eternal gender” by contrasting it with the dominant view that had emerged in contemporary feminist and queer theory that the sex/gender distinction and the concept of gender itself was historically contingent, not an expression of a timeless ideal. This problem of decontextualizing sexual difference as an immutable feature needed greater theological reflection. Gender essentialism did not hold much philosophical credibility, at least not in ways that matched with Mormon theologizing. Further, I wanted to question whether the privileging of gender as a distinctive feature of human identity was necessary for a post-heterosexual theology.

My arguments were a thought experiment to lay out problems that needed to be solved no matter the answers, and to propose possible solutions to those problems. I wanted to be clear that I was not advocating that my solutions were correct, nor that church leaders or members should follow my arguments. Rather, I wanted to raise critical questions



about the best arguments that stood in the way of affirming same-sex sealing and explore their strengths and weaknesses.

### Reception

The finished article appeared in December 2011 on the *dialoguejournal.com* website. I wasn't sure that anyone would read it. The article made perfect sense to me as a someone who had been working closely in poststructuralist thought, psychoanalysis, and feminist and queer theory. Yet I knew that the arguments were a still somewhat dense for most casual readers. The editors at *Dialogue* gently nudged me to tone down some of the jargon, but it meant something to me to say what I wanted to say in the idiom in which I had been immersed. Their advice was probably right, but I am pleased that the barrier to entry into the article was not so high that no one could make heads or tails of it. The misunderstandings that have emerged in the reception of the article seem to be more strategic misrepresentation than my miscommunication, though there are things that I might say differently now.

My recollection is that there was still some anxiety on my part and the part of *Dialogue* about the article going live. Kristine Haglund was not only editing *Dialogue* but also blogging at *ByCommonConsent.com* and worked out the idea to announce it there. The entry received the innocuous title "Guest Post From Dialogue" and went live on December 9, 2011. In the entry, I wrote a brief introduction explaining that the significance of my article was to offer a model for future LDS theology, to connect mainstream Mormon theology with feminist theology, and finally, to "suggest that we think less about the types of sex that people are having and more about the types of relationships that people are building."<sup>15</sup> Between the blog title and my tepid post, we all seemed to be burying the lede. Still, the post received nearly two hundred (mostly)

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15. Taylor Petrey, "Guest Post From Dialogue," *By Common Consent* (blog), Dec. 11, 2011, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2011/12/09/guest-post-from-dialogue/>.

substantive comments and was the early place for generating attention about the article.

Over the following days, weeks, and months, there were a number of blog posts responding to me. The article received mentions *Slate*, the *Daily Beast*, and the *New York Times*. Facebook was another hub for conversation as the article was being shared and praised widely. Kaimi Wegner wrote, “Holy cow. Have you seen Taylor Petrey’s new article? It is a must-read.” Richard Livingston wrote on a listserv:

It seems to me that the single most impressive aspect of Taylor’s article isn’t so much the many insightful possibilities that it suggests—which it does very admirably—but rather the questions it raises, or perhaps better, the way in which it raises those questions. . . . Sometimes just clarifying the significance of a single question can be every bit as illuminating as the discovery of a potential solution to some long-standing dilemma, and yet Taylor illuminates the true depth and breadth and scope of multiple questions in this essay. Thus, he isn’t just asking the right question, but he’s asking multiple thought-provoking questions in all the right ways.

I was deeply appreciative of the positive feedback from many LDS readers.

I learned over the next few years that the article was not only being read in Latter-day Saint contexts but was being assigned in courses throughout North America on theology, sex, and religion. One of my former advisors at Harvard mentioned that she assigned it in her undergraduate classes and that “it was the first article I read all the way through in years.” Since then I have received possibly hundreds of expressions of gratitude from friends, family, and total strangers for voicing their own concerns, giving them new frameworks and questions, and for creating space for further conversation.

Not all of the feedback was positive. Several people challenged my ideas, some with greater sophistication than others. I want to point out three responses that I think were particularly important because of their substantive merit or influence on later events. The first came

out of the small, but capable Mormon theological community that had been growing for much of the first decade of the 2000s. Joseph Spencer, then a graduate student, had a related expertise to many of the post-structuralist theories that informed my own work. He wrote a letter to the editor to *Dialogue*, first posted on the website and then in the next issue of the journal, responding to “Taylor Petrey’s carefully executed, unmistakably informed, rightly concerned, and entirely productive essay.” Yet Spencer criticized me for not doing “any actual work on constructing a Mormon queer theory in this essay.”<sup>16</sup> That is, Spencer suggested that my project went too far in abandoning the Mormon elements of a theology by questioning whether “eternal gender” was an essential church teaching. Spencer then took a different tack on this issue, briefly laying out a view of gender essentialism that is both critical and coherent. I remain unpersuaded that a reformed theory of gender essentialism is either a necessary starting point for a Mormon theology, or that it would not also be just as revisionist as my own. Still, Spencer’s idea holds promise about how a coherent version of essentialism might be brought into conversation with LDS thought.

The second piece of feedback arrived in the form of an organized protest. Far-right activist Stephen Graham, founder of the Standard of Liberty, an anti-gay group, planned a protest against me during a conference at which I was slated to speak at Brigham Young University. The conference was on the theme of “The Apostasy,” the proceedings of which were later published in an edited volume with Oxford University Press titled *Standing Apart*. At the 2012 conference, I was invited to deliver a paper on the concept of the Apostasy in early Christianity.<sup>17</sup>

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16. Joseph Spencer, “Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2012): xxv.

17. Published as, Taylor G. Petrey, “Purity and Parallels: Constructing the Apostasy Narrative of Early Christianity,” in *Standing Apart: Mormon Historical Consciousness and the Concept of Apostasy*, edited by Melissa Wilcox and John Young (New York: Oxford University Press), 174–95.

The day before the event, Graham sent an email about me to a list of at least one organization he runs, called UtahsRepublic.org, which advocates for radical changes to public education.

Graham was a known provocateur on same-sex relationships when I came on his radar. His Standard of Liberty organization protested BYU events on homosexuality multiple times. He objected to the BYU Honor Code change in 2007 and warned that BYU professors were teaching “homosexuality” as well as “socialism” and “anti-Americanism.”<sup>18</sup> His email about me suggested that I was “an apostate” who had “written in opposition of male-female marriage and gender as an eternal characteristic” and “called for homosexual sealings in LDS temples.” Graham then instructed individuals to call BYU president Cecil Samuelson on this “urgent” issue and included a copy of the email that he and his wife Janice Graham had sent to Samuelson seeking to de-platform me. Their letter warned:

We represent an organization of like-minded people with a subscription list of nearly 8000. Petrey must not be allowed to speak, as he stands in active opposition to Church doctrine, and as such is apostate, the very topic he is to speak on.

Please respond and let us know how you intend to address this matter.

We will be sending out an email newsletter addressing this issue, and we would like to say that BYU did the right thing when it was brought to their attention that a speaker at one of their conferences was in direct opposition to the Church and its doctrines.<sup>19</sup>

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18. Ryan Konnen, “BYU Too Liberal on Gay Issues According to Standard of Liberty Founders Stephen and Janice Graham,” *unambiguous* (blog), Nov. 28, 2011, <https://ryambiguous.wordpress.com/2011/11/28/byu-too-liberal-on-gay-issues-according-to-standard-of-liberty-founders-stephen-and-janice-graham/>.

19. Oak Norton forwarding Stephen Graham, “[Utah’s Republic] BYU Speaker today- ALERT for LDS,” email to author, Mar. 1, 2012.

I learned of this specific content of the email later on, but I learned of its effects immediately as the conference was getting started. I arrived in Provo the night before the conference and heard that multiple complaints had been made against my presence at BYU that day. I was distraught at the accusation, frustrated by the misrepresentation of my argument, and bothered by their labeling me as something that I was not.

BYU was scrambling to respond to this protest that had be foisted on them at the last minute. On the day of the conference, the dean of humanities, who had been tasked by President Samuelson to address the matter, scheduled a meeting with me to assess whether I would be a problem for them. The dean expressed concerns about the content of “Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology” and wanted to be reassured that nothing that I said that day in my talk would cover those topics, among other things. I also learned that undercover officers would be stationed in the audience for my protection in case the protest led to a disruption of the event. I delivered my talk and afterward was approached by Stephen Graham and another man, who I was not able to identify. They grilled me on my views on homosexuality and gave me their perspective that homosexuality was something that someone could change with help. Later that year, Graham would protest other speakers and events at BYU on homosexuality.<sup>20</sup>

The final early response that I mention came in the form of an essay by Valerie Hudson Cassler. As noted above, she entered into debates about same-sex marriage by making a conservative feminist argument against the practice. Since that time, she continued to lay out her views

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20. Peg Mcentee, “BYU Does the Right Thing as Anti-gay Website Howls,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, Mar. 31, 2012, <https://archive.sltrib.com/article.php?id=53826059&iotype=CMSID>; Rosemary Winters and Brian Maffly, “Gay and Mormon: BYU Students Speak on Panel,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, Mar. 30, 2012, <https://archive.sltrib.com/article.php?id=53810073&iotype=CMSID>.

in a series of popular presentations and essays.<sup>21</sup> I had drawn on some of her scholarship and responded to some of it in “Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology.” But I was stunned by her post in the online blog/journal that she ran called *SquareTwo.org*. The Summer 2012 issue (published in September 2012) included a piece titled “Plato’s Son, Augustine’s Heir: ‘A Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology?’”<sup>22</sup> While she called my article “thoughtful and thought-provoking,” her argument was that (male) same-sex relationships were misogynistic and that I was engaged in “occult misogyny.” I was and remain hurt by the personal attacks.

Here is the logic of the argument. Celestial reproduction is an essential doctrine that cannot be changed because it is the thing that makes women necessary partners in the plan of salvation. If women do not reproduce then they have no value. Since one option that I put forward—in a variety of post-heterosexual options—does not rely on women’s eternal reproductive role, then I have made women themselves obsolete. “Women are no longer necessary for the work of the gods in the eternities, or for there to be brought forth spirit children: indeed, there need not be a Heavenly Mother, or, for that matter, earthly mothers,” she wrote.<sup>23</sup>

Her criticism was based on a selective misreading. In my article, I laid out theological and scriptural precedents for male-female, male-male, and female-female creative relationships that included both reproduction and nonreproductive generation. I called into question the theological necessity of heterosexuality and heterosexual reproduction based on the existence of male-male creative relationships already

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21. Valerie Hudson, “The Two Trees,” *FAIR*, accessed August 25, 2021, <https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/conference/august-2010/the-two-trees>.

22. V. H. Cassler, “Plato’s Son, Augustine’s Heir: ‘A Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology?’” *SquareTwo* 5, no. 2 (Summer 2012), <http://squaretwo.org/Sq2ArticleCasslerPlatosSon.html>.

23. Cassler, “Plato’s Son, Augustine’s Heir.”

in LDS theology. I did not question the necessary existence of women whose existence and importance is both affirmed and self-evident. I pointed to scholars who were examining nonreproductive kinship in Mormon thought and even her own scholarship that had equivocated on celestial reproduction.<sup>24</sup> I question Cassler's argument that reduces women's worth to reproductive output as a feminist argument.

Cassler's perspective relied on feminists who believe in social "parity" between the sexes and a complementarian notion of essential gender differences. Such parity, rather than equality, socially balanced men and women in egalitarian societies. I don't object to these goals, but I do question enforced heterosexuality as the means of achieving them and the binary ontology that Cassler uses to sustain them. This is one of the other areas of misrepresenting my argument in her response. Cassler suggested that I was putting forward a unitary ontology of gender that erased the differences between male and female. Rather, I explicitly said that I was using a pluralist ontology of gender that did not reduce sexual difference to two options: "To admit the social basis of gender does not entail the elimination of gender, nor does it require a leveling of difference toward some androgynous ideal. Quite the opposite. Instead, we may see more of a proliferation of 'genders,' released from the constraints of fantasies about a neat gender binary."<sup>25</sup> Hardly an heir to Augustinian ontology.

I submitted a reply to Hudson privately. In my email I laid out the areas where we agreed and where there was further area for disagreement, but I also wrote:

I think that you mischaracterize my argument about women's reproduction when you put quotes around the word "absurd" following a quotation of mine as if it is a continuation of what I have actually said. Of course, I never say such a thing, nor do I think it, and my argument about divine reproduction explicitly mentions both male and female

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24. Petrey, "Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology," 108–9.

25. Petrey, "Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology," 129.

reproductive processes, even in the quote you offer. Further, I spend over a page discussing the problems of women being excluded from creation in our ritual and textual accounts, as well as the dependency of women on male actors in those accounts. I do not single out women's bodies as messy, dirty, disgusting, contemptible, polluting, let alone does anything I say suggest a "profound contempt for all things female," as you accuse me of doing. I find this accusation unfair and having no basis in anything I have said.

The essay was quietly updated to correct a few errors, but her response to my email was dismissive. A week later I submitted a brief response in the public comments section of the article. My comment was held "under review" for two weeks and then appeared with her response.

Cassler became the source for a particular misreading of my project. I've been frustrated that this argument has been considered a serious response and cited as such. The idea that expanding the heavens to allow for same-sex relationships and non-binary gender identity was somehow anti-women or anti-mixed-sex relationships remains unconvincing. An expansion does not eliminate what is already allowed but draws a bigger circle around what could be allowed. Yet this kind of argument that sees egalitarianism for others as diminishment for oneself has become a familiar form of grievance. Feminists should recognize the pattern of these arguments used against them as well.

### New Directions

These responses, among many others, pushed me to think through some of the problems they raised, even when I fiercely disagreed with them. When I first wrote "Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology," I expected two things. First, it would not receive much readership or interest outside of a small group of scholars. Second, the ideas in the piece were the only real contribution that I had about the subject and I would soon return to other research projects. Both turned out to be false assumptions. Processing its reception, I found myself back on the



topic again and again. Just what was the place of essential difference in Mormon theology, how does one account for reparative therapy, and what role would Heavenly Mother play in a post-heterosexual Mormon theology? On these questions, I wanted to engage broader feminist philosophy of religion to help me.

In 2013 or so, I began writing in earnest what would become “Rethinking Mormonism’s Heavenly Mother,” published in *Harvard Theological Review* in 2016.<sup>26</sup> I hoped that one of the leading journals of the field would appreciate these questions and was grateful for their positive evaluation to publish it. In this essay, I tried to tease out the differences between women and heterosexuality that had taken hold in a variety of feminist theologies, including those in LDS circles. In “Rethinking,” I examined LDS feminist theology alongside broader feminist philosophies of religion that also insisted on the need for a divine Woman as the basis of women’s importance, especially in the thought of Luce Irigaray. I examined how the role of “mother” had taken on central importance in these kinds of theologies, how they were tied to particular understandings of gender essentialism, complementarianism, and a reproductive imperative for women. Here, I tried to connect the ontological assumptions about women shared between competing schools of Mormon feminist thought: apologetic feminists like Cassler and critical feminists like Janice Allred.

In this article, I also wanted to offer something constructive in the terms of a “generous orthodoxy.” That is, I hoped to find within the “orthodox” theologies of LDS thinkers some resources for solving the problems of gender essentialism and compulsory heterosexuality. This would extend the analysis of “Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology” that looked for alternatives to heterosexual kinship and essential gender internal to Mormon thought. I won’t rehearse the arguments in detail here, but I thank Valerie Hudson Cassler’s work

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26. Taylor G. Petrey, “Rethinking Mormonism’s Heavenly Mother,” *Harvard Theological Review* 109, no. 3 (2016): 315–41.

on the atonement as one among many instances that showed how divine characters are not defined by binary gender differences. I admit that my essay is still more pointing to a problem, namely, the singular Heavenly Mother who must represent all women, and who does so imperfectly, than clearly answering that problem, in part because of the constraints of orthodoxy I was working within. My solution was to alleviate this strain by weakening essential gender differences and therefore the processes of identification between devotees and divine figures. It was satisfactory to me, but some felt that it went too far.<sup>27</sup> In response to some criticism, I clarified: “My caution is not against a Heavenly Mother, but against using the Heavenly Mother figure to diffuse the homoerotic elements of that tradition, to intervene in a way that creates a heteronormative love as of a different order, character, and quality than the love between others, or to reify the essential difference between male and female bodies, characters, roles, and experiences. My critique is not with Heavenly Mother, but the way which she is put into discourse, the kind of work she is assigned to perform, and the

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27. See the clarifying roundtable here: Taylor Petrey, “Heavenly Mother in the *Harvard Theological Review*,” *By Common Consent* (blog), Aug. 29, 2016, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2016/08/29/heavenly-mother-in-the-harvard-theological-review/>; Margaret Toscano, “How Bodies Matter: A Response to ‘Rethinking Mormonism’s Heavenly Mother’” *By Common Consent* (blog), Aug. 30, 2016, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2016/08/30/how-bodies-matter-a-response-to-rethinking-mormonisms-heavenly-mother/>; Caroline Kline, “A Multiplicity of Theological Groupings and Identities—Without Giving Up on Heavenly Mother,” *By Common Consent* (blog), Sept. 2, 2016, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2016/09/02/a-multiplicity-of-theological-groupings-and-identities-without-giving-up-on-heavenly-mother/>; Kristine Haglund, “Leapfrogging the Waves: A Nakedly Unacademic Response to ‘Rethinking Mormonism’s Heavenly Mother,’” *By Common Consent* (blog), Sept. 7, 2016, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2016/09/07/leapfrogging-the-waves-a-nakedly-unacademic-response-to-rethinking-mormonisms-heavenly-mother/>; and Taylor Petrey, “The Stakes of Heavenly Mother,” *By Common Consent* (blog), Sept. 9, 2016, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2016/09/09/the-stakes-of-heavenly-mother/>

exclusionary rhetoric that creates a binary rather than undoes it.”<sup>28</sup> That still seems right to me.

This article on Heavenly Mother inspired another one that explored a different problem, one that I think may be more fundamental. In “Silence and Absence: Feminist Philosophical Implication of Mormonism’s Heavenly Mother,” published in *Sophia: International Journal in Philosophy and Traditions*, I continued to test my thesis that Mormon feminist philosophy had broader interests outside of Mormon studies.<sup>29</sup> In this article, I interrogate the philosophical question of how it is that speech about Heavenly Mother has a liberating impact on women and examine some of the limitations in this theory of language. While there are significant theological and cultural battles within and among LDS scholars and activists on this topic, the analysis of the mechanics of power in Heavenly Mother discourse remains ripe for significant revision, including the reliance upon theological discourse itself.

I note one other important development on spirit birth that runs adjacent to my own project on post-heterosexual theology. As noted above, some argue that the teaching is an essential doctrine to contemporary Mormonism. As I said in the original 2011 article, I am actually ambivalent on the teaching, neither for nor against it as such. I argued that there are post-heterosexual ways of thinking about celestial reproduction and pointed to ritual and scriptural “models of reproduction and creation that might suggest their possibility for same-sex partners.”<sup>30</sup> There, I also surfaced past and present LDS teachings about adoption to suggest that kinship and reproduction are distinct practices in LDS doctrine, and I warned against reducing women’s value to reproductive function.

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28. Petrey, “Stakes of Heavenly Mother.”

29. Taylor G. Petrey, “Silence and Absence: Feminist Philosophical Implications of Mormonism’s Heavenly Mother,” *Sophia: International Journal in Philosophy and Traditions* 59, no.1 (2020): 57–68.

30. Petrey, “Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology,” 112.

In early 2011, Samuel Brown and Jonathan Stapley had published important articles examining early Mormon practices of adoption that helped me think through post-heterosexual kinship in my article.<sup>31</sup> These ideas also complicated doctrines of spirit birth. An 1833 revelation to Smith first expressed the idea of an uncreated human essence: “Man was also in the begining with God, inteligence or the Light of truth was not created or made neith[er] indeed can be,” canonized in Doctrine and Covenants 93.<sup>32</sup> The implications are extreme, rejecting creation *ex nihilo* and denying that God is ontologically distinct from humans, who are co-eternal with the divine. This teaching was repeated in many of Joseph Smith’s speeches, translations, and revelations—perhaps in explicit disagreement with the doctrine of spirit birth as it was developing among some of his disciples in 1843–44.<sup>33</sup> Smith’s famous “King Follet Discourse,” a key text distilling his radical theological developments explained, “God never did have power to create the spirit of man at all.”<sup>34</sup>

In the 2010s, there was a significant debate among historians and theologians on the doctrine of spirit birth. Much of this did not engage the implications of such a challenge for same-sex kinship directly, but their work remains deeply relevant to the topic. In 2012 and 2013, Brown published more on the issue of adoption, including an extensive theological treatment of it in *BYU Studies*.<sup>35</sup> He called Smith’s adop-

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31. Brown, “Early Mormon Chain of Belonging”; Brown, “Early Mormon Adoption Theology”; Stapley, “Adoptive Sealing Ritual.”

32. Revelation, 6 May 1833 [D&C 93], The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-6-may-1833-dc-93/8>.

33. Van Hale, “The Origin of the Human Spirit in Early Mormon Thought,” in *Line Upon Line*, edited by Gary James Bergera (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 122.

34. Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by William Clayton, 16, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-william-clayton/6>.

35. Samuel M. Brown, “The ‘Lineage of My Priesthood’ and the Chain of Belonging,” in *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 203–47; Samuel

tion project an “attack on proto-Victorian culture,”<sup>36</sup> and expanded on what he and Stapley had hinted at in their 2011 articles, that “the notion of biological reproduction between divine beings as the origin of human spirits was not the only idea that prevailed in early Mormonism. Understanding this aspect of early Mormonism on its own terms may be useful to our era’s engagement of questions of human relationships and identity.”<sup>37</sup> The limitations of the normative biological, heterosexual model of family and kinship poses the opportunity to explore alternative models, and early Mormon adoption theology might beneficially inform such conversations.

Some accepted this overall historical narrative that the doctrines of spirit birth did not originate with Smith. Terryl Givens, for instance, describes the shift to a literalistic notion of spirit birth as a “decisive” shift in the post-Smith period.<sup>38</sup> Others, however, pushed back against Brown and Stapley, arguing that spirit birth traced back to Smith himself. Brian Hales became a prominent defender of a historical link between Smith and spirit birth. Such a notion, he argued, may be tied to the promise of eternal increase, “a continuation of the seeds forever and ever” (D&C 132:19) in the revelation given on plural marriage.<sup>39</sup> However, Stapley convincingly shows that the evidence that Joseph Smith favored spirit birth is incredibly circumstantial and weak. There is no reason to read spirit birth into Joseph Smith’s teaching when other

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M. Brown, “Believing Adoption,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (2013): 45–65; Brown, “Early Mormon Chain of Belonging”; Brown, “Early Mormon Adoption Theology”; Samuel M. Brown and Jonathan A. Stapley, “Mormonism’s Adoption Theology: An Introductory Statement,” *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 3 (2011): 1–2.

36. Brown, “Early Mormon Adoption Theology,” 23.

37. Brown and Stapley, “Mormonism’s Adoption Theology,” 2.

38. Terryl Givens, *Wrestling the Angel: The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Cosmos, God, Humanity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 158.

39. Brian C. Hales, “‘A Continuation of the Seeds’: Joseph Smith and Spirit Birth,” *Journal of Mormon History* 38, no. 4 (2012): 105–30.

more plausible options exist. In this case, the “continuation of seeds” seems to indicate the bonds that connect one to one’s descendants in perpetuity, not a process of celestial sexual reproduction.<sup>40</sup>

The historical questions are distinct, I think, from the theological issues. Whether Smith is or is not the source for the doctrine of spirit birth does not resolve the question of whether it is a good theological view. While the value of “motherhood” has been a driving feature for a variety of different feminists who promote a robust Heavenly Mother teaching, the version of motherhood imagined there is incredibly restrictive. For instance, it continues to link the title of “mother” to reproductive kinship alone. Medical technology today provides an obvious place to disrupt the notions of motherhood and sexual reproduction, including in vitro fertilization, surrogacy, and more.<sup>41</sup> Others have examined “kinning,” the practices of adoption and other kinship relations that establish motherhood in same-sex families, for single women, and in other adoptive contexts.<sup>42</sup>

The emphasis on biological motherhood as the primary role for Heavenly Mother not only reduces her role and function to a conduit but obscures the practices of motherhood as cultural and symbolic actions that define the postnatal relationship. Setting aside older models of “fictive” versus “real” kinship, all kinship practices involve

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40. Jonathan Stapley, “A Response to Hales on ‘Spirit Birth,’” *By Common Consent* (blog), Dec. 11, 2019, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2019/12/11/a-response-to-hales-on-spirit-birth/>; Brown, “Believing Adoption,” 45–65.

41. Petra Nordqvist, “Bringing Kinship into Being: Connectedness, Donor Conception and Lesbian Parenthood,” *Sociology* 48, no. 2 (2014): 268–83.

42. S. Howell, “Kinning: The Creation Of Life Trajectories In Transnational Adoptive Families,” *Journal Of The Royal Anthropological Institute* 9 (2003): 465–68; Eirini Papadaki, “Becoming Mothers: Narrating Adoption and Making Kinship in Greece,” *Social Anthropology* 28, no. 1 (February 2020): 153–67; Janette Logan, “Contemporary Adoptive Kinship: A Contribution to New Kinship Studies,” *Child and Family Social Work* 18, no. 1 (February 2013): 35–45; Stacy Lockerbie, “Infertility, Adoption and Metaphorical Pregnancies,” *Anthropologica* 56, no. 2 (2014): 463–71.

the sharing of material substance to produce enduring connections far beyond genetic links. The sharing of food, space, touch, and so on reveal the ways that kinship is irreducible to reproduction.<sup>43</sup>

Again, while I am still not opposed to divine reproduction within a post-heterosexual Mormon theology, I remain convinced that adoption theology offers a crucial wedge in such a project. In his 2013 article, Brown argued that the notion of love and relationships is actually the ground of Mormon theology. “We all,” he argues, “through our acts of loving intensely as parents, become gods because the pure participation in *agape* is the definition of godhood.”<sup>44</sup> Brown sees in adoption theology an imputed communal responsibility by making humans interdependent. He explains, “Adoption theology holds out to me the possibility that what matters most are the sacred bonds we create with each other, the spiritual energies we invest in those we care for.”<sup>45</sup> Brown further argues that the adoption theology of Mormonism’s past offers a support for legal adoption today, as well as to “comfort Latter-day Saints facing infertility and support those who adopt or serve as foster parents as part of their personal devotions or life’s work.”<sup>46</sup> Though Brown does not say so explicitly, these same benefits may be provided to same-sex couples for one another and in their efforts to extend their love and care to others. There is no particularly important place for gender in such a theology of love and kinship, even if gender may have value in others dimensions.

In my own thinking over the past decade, I began to consider not just the theological ideas themselves but also the historical conditions that gave rise to them. In the conversations that were emerging from

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43. Michael Sahllins, *What Kinship Is—And Is Not* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 62–86.

44. Samuel M. Brown, “Mormons Probably Aren’t Materialists,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 50, no. 3 (2017): 66.

45. Brown, “Believing Adoption,” 62.

46. Brown, “Believing Adoption,” 64.

my article, and seeing how the larger conversations about same-sex relationships in LDS communities were going, I sensed a few developments. The first was that even if people could agree that my analysis in “Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology” was theoretically possible, the weight of the historical tradition of heterosexuality excluded an adequate precedent for change. While my goal was never to argue for the need to change LDS teachings, I became increasingly interested in this historical apologetic for heterosexuality. Was heterosexuality a consistent teaching in LDS history? My theological approach to post-heterosexual kinship was shifting toward an interest in interrogating the historical landscape that had led people to believe that heterosexuality was a central feature in the LDS tradition. I was skeptical. I knew enough about LDS history and American history to be wary of claims about an unchanging “tradition” about gender and sexuality.

I have already expressed skepticism about a historical apologetic that attempts to resolve the authority of a position by tracing it back to Joseph Smith. In this approach to history, Smith or his early followers were the font of authentic Mormonism and we must give especially close attention to their teachings to make an authoritative argument about theology. I learned to be skeptical of the search for “origins” as a rhetorical and historical framework from my studies of early Christianity specifically and in religious studies more generally, where the concept of “origins” has come under significant scrutiny. Such a quest ignores that the “origins” are also embedded in their own historical contexts. I also wanted to disrupt the idea that contemporary Mormonism could (or should) be traced back to its nineteenth-century roots. As my thinking developed, I hoped that I could take on a project that would explain modern Mormonism in its own historical context of contemporary American culture rather than as an unmediated outgrowth of Smith or Brigham Young. The result was *Tabernacles of Clay: Gender and Sexuality in Modern Mormonism*.<sup>47</sup> I was honored when

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47. Taylor G. Petrey, *Tabernacles of Clay: Gender and Sexuality in Modern Mormonism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020).



the Mormon History Association gave it the Best Book Award for 2021.<sup>48</sup>

I am pleased that others saw the need to tell a similar story, most importantly Gregory Prince, *Gay Rights and the Mormon Church*, which covers roughly the same time period but from a different theoretical and methodological angle.<sup>49</sup> My interest in the history of sexuality and gender studies helped guide my approach to this material and shape a narrative that spoke to some of my bigger questions. I have come to see that *Tabernacles* was working out, in part, a history about an idea that I first recognized in “Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology”: “Church teachings assert two ideas about gender identity that are in significant tension: first, that gender is an eternal, immutable aspect of one’s existence; and second, that notions of gender identity and roles are so contingent that they must be constantly enforced and taught, especially to young children.”<sup>50</sup> This tension was not, I believed, insignificant but rather animated much of modernity in general and modern Mormonism specifically.

My sense was that the dominant approach to the topic by previous scholars had assumed three things. First, that the difference between male and female was a fixed and unchanging doctrine, essential to the LDS theological tradition itself and not a subject of historical inquiry. Second, the difference between homosexuality and heterosexuality was also a fixed line that stood outside of history or historical change in the LDS theological tradition. That is, on these two points there was no history. These two points informed the third, namely, that LDS teachings derived from Joseph Smith and LDS scripture and therefore did not have a broader historical context. The history of sexuality, by contrast,

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48. In 2021, the award was shared with Benjamin Park, *The Kingdom of Nauvoo: The Rise and Fall of a Religious Empire on the American Frontier* (New York: Liveright, 2020).

49. Gregory A. Prince, *Gay Rights and the Mormon Church: Intended Actions, Unintended Consequences* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2019).

50. Petrey, “Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology,” 123–24.

pushed me to think about the changes in practices and conceptual frameworks on the nature of gender and sexuality. This also helped me approach the question intersectionally to understand the overlapping relationships between ideologies of race, gender, and sexuality.

I took a historical approach to another related project as well. Amy Hoyt and I were putting together the *Routledge Handbook of Mormonism and Gender*.<sup>51</sup> I assigned myself a chapter on “Theology of Sexuality” that that would discuss LDS treatments of this topic. There, I wrote about three distinct phases of LDS theology of sexuality that, in my view, were radically different from one another. In the first, the era of plural marriage, I surveyed the approaches to sexuality that could be found there. In the early era of monogamy, a strict sexual morality took hold in LDS culture that saw sex and reproduction as inseparable. I then discussed the “Mormon sexual revolution” that emerged in the 1970s and increasingly challenged the relationship between sex and reproduction in a quest for greater sexual satisfaction as its own value. Historicizing Mormon approaches to sexuality, gender, and marriage hopefully offers an alternative to the historical apologetics that often dominate this subfield. Instead of internal histories that emphasize continuity, I invite scholars to situate these ideas in broader trends and contexts and to explore changes and discontinuity.

Over the past decade, a substantial and significant conversation about gender, sexuality, and kinship has continued to unfold in Mormon studies. I am encouraged by the conversations, even when there has been significant and sometimes sharp disagreement, for spurring further research and clarifying issues and arguments. In addition to the theological and historical approaches discussed above, other scholars have taken these issues in new directions.<sup>52</sup> Blaire Ostler’s work

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51. Amy K. Hoyt and Taylor G. Petrey, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Mormonism and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

52. Bryce Cook, “What Do We Know of God’s Will for His LGBT Children? An Examination of the LDS Church’s Position on Homosexuality,” *Dialogue*:

has been particularly interested in advancing these conversations, culminating in her recent book *Queer Mormon Theology: An Introduction*.<sup>53</sup> The Queer Mormon Women project by Jenn Lee and Kerry Spencer is adding new perspectives and voices.<sup>54</sup> In addition, there are now more conversations about trans issues that further engage with crucial topics, especially in the work of Kelli Potter.<sup>55</sup> Further, the historical and theoretical work of Peter Coviello should have much to contribute to a reevaluation of bodies, sex, and power in Mormon theology.<sup>56</sup> I am grateful to have contributed something to this conversation and to have tracked some of the development that has taken this work in different directions. What is clear is that there is much more to say, including the coming Spring 2022 issue of *Dialogue*, which is dedicated to the theme of Heavenly Mother. What the next ten years hold remains to be seen.

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*A Journal of Mormon Thought* 50, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 1–52; Robert A. Rees and William S. Bradshaw, “LGBTQ Latter-day Saint Theology,” *Dia Blogue* (blog) Aug. 20, 2020, <https://www.dialoguejournal.com/2020/08/lgbtq-latter-day-saint-theology/>.

53. Blaire Ostler, “Queer Polygamy,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 52, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 33–43.

54. Queer Mormon Women and Gender-Diverse Folx, <https://www.qmwproject.com>.

55. Kelli D. Potter, “A Transfeminist Critique of Mormon Theologies of Gender,” in *The Lost Sheep in Philosophies of Religion: New Perspectives on Disability, Gender, Race, and Animals*, edited by Blake Hereth and Kevin Timpe (New York: Routledge, 2019), 312–27; Kelli D. Potter, “Trans and Mutable Bodies,” in Hoyt and Petrey, *Routledge Handbook of Mormonism and Gender*, 539–52.

56. Peter Coviello, *Make Yourself Gods: Mormons and the Unfinished Business of American Secularism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019).

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