

DIALOGUE

A Journal of Mormon Thought



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A Journal of Mormon Thought

is an independent quarterly established to express Mormon culture and to examine the relevance of religion to secular life. It is edited by Latter-day Saints who wish to bring their faith into dialogue with the larger stream of world religious thought and with human experience as a whole and to foster artistic and scholarly achievement based on their cultural heritage.

The journal encourages a variety of viewpoints; although every effort is made to ensure accurate scholarship and responsible judgment, the views expressed are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily those of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or of the editors.

Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought is published quarterly by the Dialogue Foundation. *Dialogue* has no official connection with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Third-class postage is paid at Salt Lake City, Utah. Contents copyright 2006 by the Dialogue Foundation. ISSN 0012-2157

Dialogue is also available on microforms through University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 and 18 Bedford Row, London WC1R4EJ, England. *Dialogue* is indexed by the *ATLA Religion Database*, published by the American Theological Library Association, 250 S. Wacker Dr., 16th Flr., Chicago, IL 60606, email: atla@atla.com; website: <http://www.atla.com>; *Dialogue* is also indexed by ABC-CLIO, 130 Cremona Drive, Suite C, Santa Barbara, CA 93117, website: <http://www.abc-clio.com>.

Submissions: *Dialogue* welcomes articles, essays, poetry, notes, fiction, letters to the editor, and art. Submissions should follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition. **Electronic submissions are preferred.** Send attachments in Word or WordPerfect to dialoguemss@aol.com. **Please provide mailing address and phone number.** Submissions may also be made in printed copy. Mail three copies to Dialogue Submissions Office, 704 228th Ave. NE, #723, Sammamish, WA 98074. Phone: (425) 898-9562. For submissions of visual art, consult the editor for specifications at dialoguemss@aol.com or (425) 898-9562. Allow eight to twelve weeks for review of all submissions. Submissions published in the journal, including letters to the editor and brief notes, are covered by our Publication Policy, under which the author retains the copyright in the work and grants *Dialogue* permission to publish. See www.dialoguejournal.com/submissions.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dialogue Reconsidered

I received a letter in the mail recently soliciting donations for the support of your journal. It included a well-written message from Hardy Redd and Levi Peterson to which I would like to refer. The first line of their letter read, “Who would have thought it possible—a serious scholarly journal responsibly examining religious faith and practice from a *friendly* yet independent point of view?” (emphasis mine).

I was a regular subscriber to *Dialogue* for many years—up until eight or nine years ago. It then achieved for me what I understood to be the fundamental goal of the publication, which was to provide thoughtful, sincere submissions that “enlightened our minds, encouraged our spirits and blessed [me] in both [my] individual and institutional faith,” to again quote from the Redd-Peterson letter. I found that the majority of the articles accomplished that goal, and I also decided that, as long as at least some of the articles were friendly and positive, I would happily overlook the other half.

But over a period of two or three years, I sensed a subtle movement of the tone of the articles from “friendly” to cynical/critical. I would open some issues and not find a single article that I felt “enlightened my mind” or strengthened my faith. And I ultimately decided that the publication was no longer worth my time.

Through the years, I have saved numerous *Dialogue* articles that I knew I would want to refer to again and again.

They were articles that “spoke” to me in special ways and, indeed, strengthened my faith and resolve to draw closer to my Heavenly Father. They were articles that I knew would never be published in the official Church magazines but that were, nevertheless, uplifting and supportive of the cornerstones of my faith, which are the existence of a loving Heavenly Father, the life and mission of the Savior, Jesus Christ, the restoration of the gospel of the Jesus Christ in our time through a newly called prophet of God, the veracity of the Book of Mormon as scripture, and the heavenly mission of the Church in our day accompanied by the priesthood of God.

I can be accurately described as a fairly “party-line” member of the Church. But I looked forward to receiving *Dialogue* when I perceived it as “friendly.”

I’m going to resubscribe now after these many years. You will receive my subscription in the mail in the next several weeks. And I will send along some additional money to further support your efforts. But it will only be for one year—just enough time to discover if things have changed in the last several years since I stopped receiving your journal.

I don’t send this letter in a threatening spirit, but rather to confirm to you that there are members of the Church who are very interested in receiving a *Dialogue* that is challenging yet *friendly* and that if the publication will focus on enlightening our minds and encouraging our spirits in a way

that does not criticize nor seek to cast doubt on the fundamental tenets, I, for one, will subscribe and read.

*Richard Ward
Eden Prairie, Minnesota*

A Note to Jiro Numano from a Nisei American

This is a note to Jiro Numano in regard to his recent article in *Dialogue* ("Perseverance and Paradox: The Struggle of the LDS Church in Japan Today," 39, no. 4 [Winter 2006]: 138–55). I am Nisei, a U.S. citizen, and non-LDS. I am seventy-one years old and have associated with many members of the LDS Church during and after World War II in Ogden, Utah. I have worked for a Japanese company for ten years and have associated with a Japanese company for three years in the Human Resources Management. I am presently retired.

My mother and father were baptized in a Protestant church in Japan, my mother in an American mission, my father in an English mission. Here are my thoughts about my mother's belief in Christianity. She believed in a superstitious way and, more often than not, resorted to her earlier Japanese beliefs. She participated with a Protestant church because of her love of music. My father was more on the neutral side, participating inconsistently.

My observations of the Japanese way of life are the following: They follow the crowd and try not to stick out in a group or crowd. They are very sensitive to the opinion of others. They follow many built-in cultural obligations, observing births, birthdays, and deaths.

Public image is very important. They are very stoic. They do not complain to friends or relatives and do not involve others in their predicaments. Traditions are very important even though they may not understand their origins. Their ability to inquire and their ability to express healthy skepticism are not very highly developed. Academic achievement is very important. They feel insecure when change is suggested. Buddhism and Shintoism are formalities and may not be totally understood by the majority. Vocational image and positions are critical. A well-established relationship is the ultimate requirement before trust is developed.

I write all of the above because I feel that Japanese culture has to be better understood before there can be growth in spiritual areas. I am reminded about why the United States may not be successful in the Middle East. We Americans, as a country, do not understand many cultures. I just felt compelled to write to Jiro to give him my input. I hope that it will be taken as thoughts for future consideration and not taken as preaching to the choir.

*Yukio Shimomura
Morgan Hill, California*

Jiro Numano Responds

Thank you so much for your frank comments on my article, "Perseverance and Paradox: The Struggle of the LDS Church in Japan Today." Your observations of the Japanese way of life are correct and are still observed among Japanese society. I agree with you.

I suppose your comments are based on your lifelong personal experiences as you must have gone through various predicaments both in American society and Japanese organizations for a long time. I appreciate your complimentary note very much.

You will be interested to know that, in my former articles in *Dialogue*, I described some of the Japanese characteristics like *hon-ne* and *tatemae*, respect for order and authority (29, no. 1 [Spring

1996]), and passivity in communication (13, no. 1 [Spring 1980]).

I wish you good health.

Jiro Numano
Hiroshima, Japan

Erratum: The name of Kristen Carson, author of the short story “Follow Me, Boys,” was misspelled in the table of contents of *Dialogue* 40, no. 2 (Summer 2007).



Allan West; *Ancient Pine*; brass powder, mica, natural mineral pigment, deer bone glue binder; on Japanese mulberry paper; 250 cm x 150 cm

The Case against Same-Sex Marriage

Randolph G. Muhlestein

The battle over same-sex marriage in America is shaping up as one of the defining political and moral controversies of this decade. The issue has been the subject of numerous legislative debates, initiative measures, and court cases. On October 18, 2004, the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued the following statement regarding the issue:

We of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints reach out with understanding and respect for individuals who are attracted to those of the same gender. We realize there may be great loneliness in their lives but there must also be recognition of what is right before the Lord.

As a doctrinal principle, based on sacred scripture, we affirm that marriage between a man and a woman is essential to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children. The powers of procreation are to be exercised only between a man and a woman lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

Any other sexual relations, including those between persons of the same gender, undermine the divinely created institution of the family. The Church accordingly favors measures that define marriage as the union of a man and a woman and that do not confer legal status on any other sexual relationship.¹

This is a hard doctrine for many Latter-day Saints. Many of us have family members or loved ones who have endured great suffering because of their sexual orientation. Often they are among the most talented, trustworthy, and goodhearted people we know. I have two homosexual cousins. One of them began living a homosexual lifestyle in the 1970s and recently died of AIDS. The other married and had children before publicly acknowledging his sexual orientation but continues to provide financial and emotional support to his ex-wife and children. Wouldn't it have been better

for my cousins had society and the Church been more understanding of their condition and permitted them to aspire to marriage with compatible partners, rather than condemning them to lives of secrecy, shame, discrimination, excommunication, and, in one case, early death?

During my lifetime, homosexuals and other minorities and oppressed groups of many kinds (e.g., racial minorities, religious minorities, women, the aged, and the disabled) have fought for and achieved greater social acceptance and legal protection. Probably most Americans would view the social and legislative accomplishments of the various civil rights movements as among the most important achievements of American society during the last fifty years.

Already the gay rights movement has achieved much. Laws outlawing sodomy between consenting adults have been declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court;² laws have been enacted in many states protecting gays and lesbians from hate crimes and employment discrimination; and gays and lesbians have achieved greater acceptance in the media and in society in general. Some Latter-day Saints view the approval of same-sex marriage as a logical and inevitable next step in the battle for civil rights and are dismayed to see the Church they love on the wrong side of history.

Thus, the case for same-sex marriage seems compelling, particularly from the perspective of those who either have a homosexual orientation or who care deeply about someone who does, or of those who care about protecting the rights and dignity of minorities who suffer from persecution because of their sexual or marriage practices. (Our Mormon forebears could tell us something about that.) Nonetheless, I believe that the case against same-sex marriage is more compelling and that, as Latter-day Saints, we will likely be called upon to articulate and support that case in the ongoing culture wars.

The battle over same-sex marriage is fought on several fronts: constitutional, scriptural, and sociological. I will briefly discuss some of the constitutional and scriptural arguments before turning to the sociological arguments, which will take up the bulk of the article.

The Constitutional Arguments

Although legislation permitting same-sex marriage has been enacted in a number of foreign countries³ and legislation permitting same-sex civil unions or domestic partnerships has been enacted in several U.S. states,⁴

to date, no U.S. state has enacted legislation approving same-sex marriage.⁵ To date, the principal victories achieved by advocates of same-sex marriage in the United States have been in the courts. The first key victory was in the 1993 decision of *Baehr v. Lewin*,⁶ in which the Hawaii Supreme Court interpreted the Hawaii ban on same-sex marriage as violating the Hawaii constitution. A lower state court in Alaska followed with a similar ruling⁷ and, in 2003, so did the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts.⁸ In Vermont, the state's highest court ruled that the state legislature must either approve same-sex marriage or adopt legislation that affords same-sex couples who enter into civil unions the same rights under state law as married couples.⁹ The court rulings in both Hawaii and Alaska were invalidated by legislative initiatives amending their respective constitutions before any same-sex marriages were actually performed, and a similar initiative challenge has been mounted in Massachusetts. In the meantime, however, same-sex marriages have been performed in Massachusetts since 2004.

In general, the legal argument that prohibiting same-sex marriage is unconstitutional goes something like this:

1. State prohibitions of same-sex marriage are classifications based on sex, and/or are governmental actions that impinge upon the fundamental privacy and due process rights of individuals.

2. Classifications or governmental actions of this type may be upheld only if they can be justified by a sufficiently strong governmental interest.

3. The justifications that are put forth by the state (e.g., promoting procreation, ensuring an optimal setting for child rearing, preserving state resources) are not sufficiently compelling.

The opinions mandating same-sex marriage are eloquently, even poetically, written and, at least on the surface, appear to be logical extensions of prior constitutional decisions. But constitutional interpretation is more an art than a science and can never be a merely deductive process. While constitutional provisions are often written in unconditional terms (e.g., freedom of speech, freedom of the press, free exercise of religion, nonestablishment of religion), in practice, no constitutional freedom is absolute, and judges must decide cases based upon competing constitutional considerations, custom, precedent, and practical considerations, not on logic alone. For example, while the U.S. Constitution guarantees freedom of speech, that freedom does not extend to shouting "fire" in a

crowded theater or to malicious defamation of a public figure. So it is often neither reasonable nor advisable to carry a particular constitutional principle to its logical conclusion in a particular case.

Legal scholars generally agree that, in deciding constitutional cases, it is important that judges give great weight to the intent of the framers of the constitutional provisions and to judicial precedents. Otherwise, it would be difficult to know what the law is. On the other hand, many legal scholars grant the judiciary some freedom to depart from original intent and precedent in deciding constitutional cases as circumstances change, new technologies develop, and societal notions of key constitutional principles (such as free speech, cruel and unusual punishment, and privacy) evolve.

How, then, is a judge to know whether to extend a particular constitutional principle to a given situation (such as same-sex marriage) where an extension would be logically permissible but has never been done before? I leave the comprehensive consideration of this question to constitutional scholars and instead advance a modest rule of thumb: Wherever the line of judicial restraint may lie, a court has surely crossed it if (1) the framers of the Constitution that the court is interpreting would likely “roll over in their graves” if they knew the interpretation the court is giving to their language, and (2) the decision is likely to outrage a significant portion of the population. Decisions that violate this rule of thumb tend to bring the judiciary into disrepute, overly politicize the judicial selection process, and make the nation less a nation ruled by laws and majorities, and more a nation ruled by judges.¹⁰

It is clear that the framers of the Hawaii, Alaska, Vermont, and Massachusetts constitutions were not thinking about same-sex marriage when they drafted the constitutions of those states. Granted the societal attitudes of their times, it also seems fair to assume that, had the framers known that at a future time a court would construe their language as mandating same-sex marriage, they would have redrafted the constitutions to preclude that construction. Also, while public support of same-sex marriage is growing in the United States, it remains highly controversial, with recent nation-wide polls indicating that a majority of Americans oppose it.¹¹ Thus, the court decisions that mandate same-sex marriage violate my rule of thumb test and were wrongly decided.

Moreover, the court decisions mandating same-sex marriage set a dangerous precedent: If constitutional principles of privacy, equal protec-

tion, and the like are to be read broadly enough to require same-sex marriage, why should they not be extended to require state sanctioning of polygamy,¹² group marriages, brother-sister marriages (assuming one party agrees to be sterilized), or any other nontraditional family/sexual arrangement that consenting adults may propose?

Of course, my argument for judicial restraint says nothing about the merits of same-sex marriage: it says only that the legislatures or the people, and not the courts, should decide. Also, while court decisions will continue to be important in the same-sex marriage debate, the ultimate decision will be made in the court of public opinion. Any court decision will eventually be overturned, by constitutional amendment if necessary, if public opinion is sufficiently opposed.

The Scriptural Arguments

For Christians who interpret the Bible literally, the case against same-sex marriage might go something like this:

1. Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God.

And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

And said, for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. (Matt. 19:4–6; quoting Gen. 2:24)

Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. (1 Cor. 11:11)

2. Sexual relations between members of the same sex are forbidden by God.

Neither shalt thou lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. (Lev. 18:22)

If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. (Lev. 20:13)

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. (Rom. 1:26–27; see also 1 Cor. 6:9–11; 1 Tim. 1:10)

3. God will not hold guiltless a nation or society that purports to sanctify, through the God-given covenant of marriage, sexual relationships that God has declared to be an abomination: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked” (Gal. 6:7). Thus, the biblical case against same-sex marriage is straightforward; and since the relevant texts come from both testaments, can be used by both Christians and Jews.¹³

Nonetheless, some have argued that the biblical texts referenced above should not be interpreted as prohibiting homosexual relations. Some have argued, for example, that Leviticus 18:22 should be taken as a ritual prohibition, like the prohibition of eating pork, binding only on the Jews.¹⁴ Regarding this argument, Louis Crompton points out that, unlike rules relating to ritual, this law was deemed to apply to non-Jews as well as Jews: “Leviticus 18:26 specifically extends the prohibition to ‘any stranger that sojourneth among you.’ Such a law was one of the so-called Noachid precepts, binding on all the descendants of Noah—that is, on all humanity.”¹⁵

Others have argued that the biblical prohibitions do not apply to individuals who live together in a committed, same-sex marriage relationship. However, I can find no “same-sex marriage” exception in the Bible to the prohibition of homosexual relations. Moreover, interpreting the Bible in this way would go against two thousand years of Christian tradition.¹⁶

Thus, the scriptural arguments against same-sex marriage are strong and will likely resonate with Christian and Jewish Americans who hold a conservative, literalist view of the Bible, and others who do not wish to offend the conservative Christians and Jews in our midst. The scriptural arguments may also resonate to some extent with those Americans who, although not religious conservatives, are concerned about the perceived erosion of America’s traditional Judeo-Christian ethical values and would, all else being equal, prefer not to extend governmental sponsorship to practices that run contrary to those values.

However, many American Christians and Jews, while retaining much of the Judeo-Christian tradition, disregard or deemphasize those portions of the Bible (such as the prohibition of homosexual relations) that they find primitive or inconsistent with modern scientific or ethical thinking. These Christians and Jews, along with many Americans of other faiths and those who profess no faith, are unlikely to be convinced by the scriptural arguments against same-sex marriage. It is therefore incumbent

upon those who oppose same-sex marriage to develop convincing secular, or sociological, arguments.

The Sociological Arguments

In my view, the main sociological arguments against same-sex marriage are that its adoption would likely (1) damage the institution of traditional marriage, and (2) increase the numbers of people who adopt a homosexual lifestyle.

Of course, not everyone would agree that these results would be bad. Some academics and activists hold that traditional marriage is a relic of an oppressive patriarchal past that should be dismantled as quickly as possible and would applaud an increase in the numbers of individuals who adopt a homosexual lifestyle as another victory in the war for sexual liberation. Individuals who hold these views are unlikely to be swayed by any of my arguments against same-sex marriage.

But I believe that people who hold these views are still in the minority in America. I suspect, for example, that most Americans are concerned about the perceived decline in traditional marriage. Also, I suspect that while most Americans are in favor of treating homosexuals with dignity and respect and protecting them from hate crimes and employment discrimination, they would prefer, all else being equal, that their children not adopt a homosexual lifestyle and that there not be a dramatic increase in the numbers of homosexuals generally. I believe that there is good sense in these common attitudes.

Although causality is difficult to prove in the social sciences, there is a strong correlation between traditional marriage and a number of societal goods. On average, married people drink and smoke less, do better at avoiding risky behaviors, live longer and healthier lives, have more satisfying sex lives, have larger incomes, and accumulate more wealth than single people or divorced people. Further, on average, children who are raised by their biological parents in intact, two-parent families are more likely to finish high school, stay out of jail, avoid becoming teenage parents, live a healthy life, have a good relationship with their parents, and become gainfully employed than children who are raised by single parents.¹⁷

Also, it is becoming increasingly clear that, in a majority of cases, the breakup of a traditional marriage is a bad thing, not just for any children involved, but also for the divorcing parties. Most people divorce today not because of physical or emotional abuse, alcoholism, or infidelity, but be-

cause they are lonely, bored, depressed, or dissatisfied. And although some people seem to do better after a divorce, probably a majority of divorced people would have been better off in the long run had they stayed married.¹⁸ If, then, traditional marriage is good for society, and the breakup of traditional marriage is bad for society, damaging the institution of traditional marriage is likely to be bad for society.

Increasing the numbers of individuals who adopt a homosexual lifestyle would also likely be bad for society. For each individual who adopts a homosexual lifestyle, the pool of individuals eligible to enter into or maintain a traditional marriage is reduced by one. Even though the percentage of individuals in the United States today who have a same-gender sexual orientation is relatively low—perhaps on the order of 5 percent for males and half that for females¹⁹—the current impact is not negligible, particularly at a time when the birth rate has fallen below the replacement level²⁰ and the demographic possibilities of traditional marriage for certain groups of people (e.g., black women, and college-educated women age thirty and older) are limited.²¹ Were significantly larger numbers of individuals to adopt a homosexual lifestyle, the negative consequences to society could be dramatic.

And, of course, the male homosexual lifestyle has had serious negative health consequences to society. Although AIDS can be spread through a variety of mechanisms, the most common mechanism for the spread of AIDS in the United States continues to be men having sex with men.²² If the adoption of same-sex marriage increased the number of males who adopt a homosexual lifestyle, it could potentially increase the spread of AIDS.²³

I will now discuss why I believe that the adoption of same-sex marriage would probably have the dual effects of damaging the institution of traditional marriage and increasing the numbers of individuals who adopt a homosexual lifestyle.

Damage to Traditional Marriage

With a single minor exception, every known society has practiced heterosexual marriage in either a monogamous or polygamous form.²⁴ Although marriage practices differ from society to society, marriage between a man and a woman has traditionally been considered the foundation of society, vital for the procreation and rearing of children, vital to the physical and emotional welfare of the spouses, and (at least for women) the only

legitimate context for sexual expression. Moreover, for much of recorded Western history, marriage was the way the ruling classes cemented political alliances, the rich transmitted property, and the poor found their main working partners. Marriage facilitated a division of labor that was beneficial to both spouses and enabled couples to produce legitimate children who could work on the farm or in the home or workshop, take care of their parents when they got old, and inherit their parents' property when they died.²⁵ Until perhaps fifty years ago, one could have argued that traditional marriage is the natural human condition and will grow and flourish by itself, irrespective of other societal influences.

We have since learned that, while traditional marriage may have been ordained of God and may bring many benefits to society, it is not inevitable; and the fact that every major society we know about has practiced traditional marriage may be more an indication that traditional marriage is vital to the survival of society than that traditional marriage is somehow "natural."

The decline of traditional marriage in the United States is well documented. The first-time marriage rate is presently at an all-time low, and the divorce rate has increased nearly sixfold since the 1960s. The percentage of children living with married biological parents declined from 73 percent in 1972 to 52 percent in 1998. By 1980, the divorce rate stood at 50 percent. After 1981, the divorce rate leveled off and began to decline slightly, but the percentage of divorced individuals who remarried declined sharply. In the 1950s, two-thirds of divorced women remarried within five years; by 2000, only half of divorced women were married or even living with partners five years after divorce. People are now waiting longer to get married. In 1960, only 10 percent of American women between ages twenty-five and twenty-nine were unmarried; in 1998, the percentage was almost 40 percent. Between 1970 and 1999 the number of unmarried couples living together increased sevenfold. Now, more than 50 percent of marriages are preceded by a period of cohabitation. In the 1950s, more than 80 percent of households included married couples; by 2000, the number was less than 51 percent, and married couples with children constituted just 25 percent of households. In 1950, only one child in twenty was born to an unwed mother; by 2000, it was one in three.²⁶

Satisfaction within marriage is also declining. In 2001, just 38 percent of married Americans considered themselves happy with their marriages, as opposed to 53 percent twenty-five years earlier.²⁷ Only one third

of the couples in a recent study who were in their first seven years of marriage were very happily married, compared to more than half of their parents at the same stage of their lives; and 38 percent reported facing a serious marital problem, compared to 20 percent of their parents at that stage. Apparently something about modern culture makes it more difficult than in the past to achieve a successful marriage.²⁸

Undoubtedly a number of factors have contributed to the decline of traditional marriage. One factor, which developed over several centuries, was the increasing tendency of individuals to choose their marriage partners themselves, with little or no consideration of the wishes of their parents or other authority figures, and to base their choices on love, rather than on money, social class, business connections, compatibility of skills, or other more practical considerations. Love and personal emotional fulfillment came to be viewed as the primary purposes of marriage, rather than as hoped-for, but nonessential, benefits. Once it became the societal norm to marry for love, it was probably inevitable that the societal norm would eventually permit divorce when either or both of the marriage partners should cease to love.²⁹

Modernization and economic development have also affected traditional marriage. As the United States became more urban and less rural, as the economy became more industrialized and less dependent on the family farm or workshop, as private insurance and retirement plans and social welfare programs for the aged and infirm expanded, as public primary and secondary education became universal, and as American society became more mobile, children became more liabilities than assets, the roles of marriage and the family as insurance for old age and hard times became less important, the need for husbands and wives to work together as an economic team lessened, and the role of parents in educating their children and providing their economic start in life declined. No doubt these developments contributed to decreases in marriage and fertility rates, increases in divorce rates, and the weakening of ties between parents and children.

With the coming of the women's movement, greater educational and employment opportunities opened up for women, and wives became less dependent on their husbands and more able to leave abusive marriages or husbands they no longer loved. The expansion of the welfare state had similar consequences for women. Conversely, the societal opprobrium that attached to a man's abandonment of his wife and children

decreased, since they were now better able to shift for themselves or became eligible for government assistance.

The sexual revolution of the 1960s undoubtedly had a negative impact on traditional marriage. No longer was it necessary to marry to have sex, and no longer did infidelity result in social ostracism. So people married later, strayed more after marriage, and/or divorced.

Changes in the law also weakened traditional marriage, including the adoption of laws giving illegitimate children all of the rights of legitimate children and the enactment of no-fault divorce laws in most states, beginning with California in 1969.³⁰ Since illegitimate children had the same rights as legitimate children, fewer unmarried prospective parents bothered to get married; and since divorce was easy and unfaithful spouses were not penalized in divorce property settlements, more spouses strayed and/or sought divorces.

The increase in the divorce rate itself has probably had a vicious-circle effect, in that it has made married couples less willing to make the sacrifices, compromises, and emotional commitments that are essential for a long-term, happy marriage because they know that there is a 50 percent chance the marriage will break up. Consequently, they are less satisfied with their marriages and more likely to divorce.³¹ Also, as more people have divorced or remained single and as more children have been born out of wedlock, the societal pressures to marry and avoid divorce and to avoid bearing children out of wedlock have lessened, exacerbating the vicious-circle effect.

Although marriage in the United States is a civil institution controlled and administered by the government, for many Americans it is also a religious covenant. Also, for most of our history, American laws relating to marriage and divorce supported biblical principles, in that marriage was favored and divorce was difficult. Even today, the religious nature of marriage is recognized in the United States, in that marriages performed by religious authorities are recognized by the state. However, with the adoption of no-fault divorce laws, the nexus between the civil and religious concepts of marriage was weakened, and marriage became less an unbreakable covenant with conditions ordained by God and more a civil contract with negotiable conditions that can be terminated at will. No doubt the movement from God-ordained to human-made, and from covenant to contract, weakened the institution of traditional marriage.

Although I have a hard time finding anything good to say about the

sexual revolution, I don't wish to condemn romantic love, modernization, economic development, the women's movement, or equal treatment under the law for illegitimate children. And while it now appears that the legislators who approved no-fault divorce laws may have acted hastily, they probably acted from the best of intentions: They didn't want to undermine traditional marriage; they only wanted to avoid clogging the courts with fault-based divorce cases and to improve the lot of those who really needed a divorce. But their actions (along with other factors) had the unintended consequence of damaging the institution of traditional marriage.

They didn't know then what we know now: that of every hundred potential traditional marriages, some (say, twenty) are "made in heaven"; and no matter what society says, the spouses will marry and never part. Others (say, ten) are "made in hell," and the spouses, and society, will be best served if these marriages never happen, or are ended as quickly and as easily as possible and with as little social stigma as possible (at least for any innocent spouse). As for the rest (say, seventy), it will benefit society if the marriages are entered into and survive, but whether that happens will depend on the strength of the societal props that support traditional marriage.

In sum, traditional marriage is in trouble because over the past several hundred years, and especially during the last fifty years, we, as a society, have been kicking out the props that support the institution. Most of these actions have been unintentional, of course, but the effects have been devastating.

So how would the adoption of same-sex marriage affect the already seriously weakened institution of traditional marriage? Some supporters of same-sex marriage argue that extending the benefits of marriage to the homosexual community would not only benefit those homosexuals who choose to marry but would also strengthen the institution of marriage by making it available to all members of society.³² However, the disastrous effects of past tinkering with the institution of marriage should teach us to be cautious. At a minimum, the adoption of same-sex marriage would further two trends that have contributed to the weakening of traditional marriage in the past: First, it would further disassociate marriage from one of its traditional vital roles, in this case, procreation and child-rearing, thereby making the institution less important and more dispensable. And second, since same-sex marriage is anathema to biblical tradition and to

America's conservative churches, it would move marriage further from the irrevocable, God-ordained covenant model and closer to the human-made, revocable-at-will, contract model.

How dramatic an effect would the adoption of same-sex marriage have on the institution of traditional marriage? Nobody knows. Probably those heterosexuals who argue today that approving same-sex marriage would not threaten their individual marriages are right. Perhaps the effect would be felt only by their children and grandchildren, and perhaps future investigators studying the final demise of traditional marriage would have difficulty disentangling this particular effect from the effects of the many other challenges that confront traditional marriage today. But there would undoubtedly be an effect, and it seems naive to expect that the effect would be small or salutary.³³

Promoting a Homosexual Lifestyle

The received wisdom today is that, with few exceptions, people are born either heterosexual or homosexual, and nothing society or an individual can do can change his or her basic orientation.³⁴ This view is based on what is sometimes called an "essentialist" approach to sex, which Jeffrey Weeks describes as:

a method which attempts to explain the properties of a complex whole by reference to a supposed inner truth or essence, the assumption "that in all sexological matters there must be a single, basic, uniform pattern ordained by nature itself." . . . That is, in the language of modern critical science, a *reductionist* method in that it reduces the complexity of the world to the imagined simplicities of its contingent units; and it is *deterministic* in that it seeks to explain individuals as automatic products of inner compulsions, whether of genes, the instinct, the hormones, or the mysterious workings of the dynamic unconscious.³⁵

The essentialist approach has often been favored by geneticists, psychologists, and medical doctors, probably because it lends itself to the types of investigations these professions are skilled at conducting. There is also a nonessentialist approach, which, in Weeks's words, holds: "The meanings we give to 'sexuality' are socially organized, sustained by a variety of languages, which seek to tell us what sex is, what it ought to be—and what it could be. Existing languages of sex, embedded in moral treatises, laws, educational practices, psychological theories, medical definitions, social rituals, pornographic or romantic fictions, popular music, as well as

in commonsense assumptions (most of which disagree) set the horizon of the possible.”³⁶

In other words, nonessentialists believe that, while what we might broadly call “nature” may have a role in defining the sexuality (including sexual orientation) of an individual, other influences, which we might broadly call “culture,” also have an important role, particularly in determining the options available to the individual. The nonessentialist approach is often favored by anthropologists, sociologists, and historians, again probably because it lends itself to the types of investigations these professions are skilled at conducting.

Michel Foucault, a French philosopher and probably the most influential sex theorist of the 1970s and 1980s, was a strong exponent of the nonessentialist view. According to Foucault:

Sexuality must not be described as a stubborn drive, by nature alien and of necessity disobedient to a power which exhausts itself trying to subdue it and often fails to control it entirely. It appears rather as an especially dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, an administration and a population. Sexuality is not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of maneuvers and capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin, for the most varied strategies.³⁷

Foucault then discusses four “strategies” that he considers to have dominated the discussion of sexuality beginning in the eighteenth century, including a “hysterization of women’s bodies,” a “pedagogization of children’s sex,” a “socialization of procreative behavior,” and a “psychiatrization of perverse pleasure”:³⁸

What was at issue in these strategies? A struggle against sexuality? Or were they part of an effort to gain control of it? An attempt to regulate it more effectively and mask its more indiscreet, conspicuous, and intractable aspects? A way of formulating only that measure of knowledge about it that was acceptable or useful? In actual fact, what was involved, rather, was the very production of sexuality. Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct.³⁹

Foucault is a bit heavy going for someone who is neither French nor a philosopher, and I am not certain that I understand completely

what he means when he says that sexuality is a historical construct. Presumably he would concede that humans have been engaging in sexual acts from the beginning of the race but would argue that the types of acts they engage in, the frequency of those acts, and the psychological, moral, and societal meanings that are given to those acts are cultural and societal products. He also takes the position that “homosexual” is a societal construct and that, in an important sense, there were no “homosexuals” until homosexuality was scientifically characterized in the late nineteenth century.⁴⁰

The essentialist/nonessentialist argument is important for the discussion of same-sex marriage because, if the essentialists are right, there is little danger that the adoption of same-sex marriage will have a material impact on the numbers of individuals who adopt a homosexual lifestyle, except that it might have the salutary effect of encouraging some homosexuals to emerge from the closet to enjoy the fuller lives that nature intended for them. But if the nonessentialists are right, the adoption of same-sex marriage would signal that the homosexual lifestyle has truly become mainstream and acceptable—even admirable—and would therefore likely lead more individuals to adopt the lifestyle.⁴¹

Evidence for Essentialism/Nonessentialism

Subjective Evidence. The subjective evidence for the essentialist approach to homosexuality is that it seems right to many homosexuals (particularly male homosexuals) because it conforms with their life experiences. According to Eric Marcus, a popular writer on homosexual issues:

No one becomes a homosexual any more than a man or woman becomes a heterosexual. Feelings of attraction for one gender or the other are something we become aware of as we grow up. . . .

Gay and lesbian people don't choose their feelings of sexual attraction, just as heterosexual people don't choose theirs. All of us become aware of our feelings of attraction as we grow, whether those feelings are for someone of the same gender, the opposite gender, or both genders. For gay and lesbian people, the only real choice is between suppressing those feelings of same-gender attraction—and pretending to be asexual or heterosexual—and living the full emotional and physical life of a gay man or woman.⁴²

According to geneticist Dean Hamer:

Men on average stay pretty much the same, whether gay or straight,

during their entire lives. Although men usually don't acknowledge to others, or even to themselves, that they have a homosexual orientation until late adolescence or early adulthood, once that has occurred they are unlikely to change. Moreover, both gay and straight men can usually trace back their attractions to early childhood, even as early as four or five years of age. Early crushes or puppy love for gay boys are often with other boys or men.⁴³

In other words, particularly to a man, being homosexual often seems like being blue-eyed, bald, or middle-aged—it's not something he does or can change; it's something he is. Thus, what I will call the subjective, or anecdotal, evidence for the essentialist approach to sexual orientation is strong, particularly for men.

Scientific Evidence. However, the objective, or scientific, evidence for the essentialist approach to homosexuality is surprisingly weak. Despite more than a hundred years of effort, scientists and theorists have been unable to devise a satisfactory scientific or medical theory that explains homosexuality as wholly a result of genes, germs, accidents, or other factors that are independent of culture. Indeed, the scientific theory of homosexuality that is currently most popular allows a major role for culture and environment.

The first major theorist who proposed a scientific explanation for homosexuality was Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, who authored a series of writings in the 1860s and 1870s positing the existence of a third sex whose nature is inborn. This third sex had the body of a man, but the feelings of a woman. This female essence manifested itself early in childhood through partiality for girlish activities such as playing with dolls. When confronted with men who loved both men and women, he expanded his theory to accommodate them, eventually coming up with sixteen different in-born sexual natures.⁴⁴

Later in the nineteenth century, a number of medical investigators, both in the United States and in Europe, theorized that homosexuals had hermaphroditic characteristics and reported physical differences (particularly in the sizes and shapes of sex organs) between homosexuals and heterosexuals.⁴⁵

In the early twentieth century, Magnus Hirshfeld, a German physician, elaborated on the theory of sexual intermediacy, claiming that intermediacy was possible along four different lines: (1) the sex organs (i.e., hermaphroditism), (2) other body qualities (i.e., androgeny), (3) the sexual drive (i.e., homosexuality or bisexuality), and (4) other psychologi-

cal qualities (i.e., transvestism). In Hirshfeld's view, there is no such thing as a pure heterosexual: All people are only more or less strongly developed intermediates.⁴⁶

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing compiled hundreds of case histories of what were termed sexual perversions, including fetishism, sadism, masochism, and homosexuality. In general, he believed that these various perversions should be treated as diseases rather than as sins or crimes and hypothesized that they were generally caused by degeneration and heredity.⁴⁷ Similarly, Havelock Ellis, a sexologist who flourished during the early twentieth century, viewed modern marriage (as practiced by middle-class Anglo Saxons) as the evolutionary pinnacle of sexual development and sexual perversions such as homosexuality, fetishism, sadism, and masochism, as evolutionary throw-backs.⁴⁸

Beginning in the late 1930s, Clifford A. Wright, an American physician, published a series of articles in which he attributed homosexuality to hormonal imbalances.⁴⁹

For perhaps the thirty years between Freud's death in 1939 and the Stonewall riots in 1969, psychoanalysis provided the most popular explanations for homosexuality. In general, homosexuality was thought to be "psychogenic," or caused by unfortunate experiences earlier in life, such as a detached and hostile father or a seductive, overwhelming mother.⁵⁰

All of these theories—the "third sex" theory, the "sexual intermediacy" theory, the "throw-back" or "atavistic" theory, the "hormonal imbalance" theory, and the "psychogenesis" theory—have now generally fallen out of favor. It appears that homosexuals are not consistently different from heterosexuals in physical appearance, masculinity or femininity, hormones, or life experiences.⁵¹ These theories have largely been supplanted by the theory of a genetic link to sexual orientation. This theory, like all theories that link human behavior to genes, is highly controversial.⁵² (You may recall the controversy that surrounded the publication of *The Bell Curve*.⁵³) Also, the theory is unattractive to many feminist theorists, who for a generation have argued that essentially all gender-linked behavioral differences are cultural, and not genetic, in origin.⁵⁴ However, for the purposes of this article, I will assume that the theory, as advanced by its most prominent current champion, Dean Hamer, is correct in its essentials.

The theory received a significant boost in 1993 with the discovery of

the so-called “gay gene” on the X chromosome by Hamer and his research team at the National Institutes of Health. (Men have one X chromosome and one Y chromosome, and women have two X chromosomes. Accordingly, a man always inherits his X chromosome from his mother.) Hamer describes his findings as follows: “Looking at 40 pairs of gay brothers with 22 different markers, we found linkage in a region called Xq28, located at the very tip of the long arm of the X chromosome. In that region, 33 out of the 40 pairs were concordant, or the same, for a series of five closely spaced markers. That showed 83 percent sharing, which was significantly higher than the 50 percent level that would have been expected if there were no connection to sexual orientation.”⁵⁵

Hamer’s group repeated its experiment with thirty-two different pairs of gay brothers; and this time, twenty-two of the thirty-two pairs, or 67 percent, shared markers. In the second study, the group also included the heterosexual brothers of gay men and estimated that the degree of DNA sharing of the straight brothers with their gay brothers was 22 percent, significantly less than the 50 percent that would be predicted by chance.⁵⁶ Based on these studies, Hamer concluded that “the evidence is compelling that there is *some* gene or genes at Xq28 related to male sexual orientation.”⁵⁷

Although Hamer’s specific conclusion (i.e., that there is a gene or genes in the Xq28 region of the X chromosome that relates to male sexual orientation) was not immediately corroborated by other laboratories, many other studies suggest that there is a genetic link of one kind or another for male sexual orientation. Hamer summarizes the research as follows:

The research showed that male sexual orientation had many of the characteristics of a genetically influenced trait: It was consistent, stable, and dichotomous, meaning men were either gay or straight. By contrast, female sexual orientation looked more soft and fuzzy, less hard-wired: [I]t was variable, changeable, and continuous, meaning lots of women were somewhere between gay and straight. Just because a trait looks genetic, however, doesn’t mean it is. We needed to look at twins, families, and DNA.

During the past 40 years, more than a dozen twin studies of male sexual orientation have been described, and the pattern is the same. The genetically identical twin of a gay man has a greatly increased chance—though not a 100 percent chance—of also being gay, which is higher than the rate for fraternal twins, which is still higher than the rate for unrelated people. This is just the pattern for a trait that is influenced—but not strictly determined by—genes. Averaging all the studies to date, the heritability of

male sexual orientation is 50 percent. That means that being gay is about 50 percent genetic and 50 percent from other influences, a ratio found in many other behavioral traits.

So what about the missing 50 percent? Why can one man be gay even if his identical twin is not? The answer is not yet clear; but it could be biological, such as different hormonal exposure in the womb or because of unique life experiences. One thing that is *not* terribly important is how the boys are raised, specifically the shared environment provided by parents.⁵⁸

Interestingly, according to Hamer, the evidence suggests that there is not a genetic linkage for female sexual orientation:

For women, the degree of genetic influence is more mysterious, partly because there have been fewer studies but also because sexual orientation is more fluid. The best recent study suggests that female sexual identification is more a matter of environment than of heredity. . . . The rate of lesbianism was higher in the twins of lesbians than in the twins of heterosexual women, but there was no difference between identical twins and fraternal twins, meaning genes were not a factor. The results showed that for women the main influence on sexual orientation was the shared environment—being raised in the same household by the same parents—while genes seemed hardly to count at all.⁵⁹

Although the evidence for a genetic link for male homosexuality seems strong, there is a serious theoretical difficulty: How can a gene that leads men to have sex with other men, and not with women, avoid being bred out of the human race? It is true, of course, that some male homosexuals have children and at least some heterosexual men may carry the presumptive “gay gene.” However, even if the gene caused only a slight decrease in average reproductivity, it would eventually die out unless something else acted to keep it in the gene pool. Hamer addresses this difficulty as follows:

This paradox has led to many theories of how a “gay gene” might actually be adaptive. One theory, although not a good one, is that it might be useful to the species because it prevents overpopulation. This is a poor theory because genes act at the level of individuals not groups. Others have suggested the gene might be passed along indirectly because homosexuals help their heterosexual relatives to raise children.

The simplest explanation comes directly from one of the most interesting results of the research itself: the gene only works in men, not women. We wondered whether the gene might have a different role in women, so we compared the mothers and sisters of our research subjects who were either linked or unlinked for Xq28. There was no difference in the number of children or in how often they had sex, but the women with the gay ver-

sion of Xq28 did have one intriguing difference: [T]hey had begun puberty on average of six months earlier than the other mothers. Although the result is highly preliminary, it will be interesting to see if the gene somehow lengthens the reproductive span in women, allowing them time to have more children.⁶⁰

Hamer is grasping at straws—needlessly, I think, because a better explanation is suggested by his own work. In *Living with Our Genes*, he considers the influence of genes on eight different human behavioral characteristics: novelty seeking (e.g., risk taking, experience seeking, disinhibition, and impulsiveness), harm avoidance (e.g., anxiety, fear, inhibition, shyness, depression, tiredness, and hostility), anger, addiction, intelligence, obesity, longevity, and sexual behavior (including sexual orientation). In each case, he contends that genes are more or less predictive of human behavior. For example, he (or studies he cites) estimates that novelty-seeking is 58 percent inherited, shyness is 50–60 percent inherited, the tendency towards anti-social behavior among adult males is 43 percent inherited, smoking is 53 percent heritable, IQ is at least 48 percent heritable, and body weight is 70 percent inherited.

He notes, however, that in each case, environmental factors also have a role. For example, although body weight is 70 percent heritable, Americans are becoming increasingly more obese. While our genes on average are the same as our grandparents' genes, we are fatter because our food supply is richer in calories and more abundant and our lifestyles are more sedentary. In other words, while our grandparents carried the same "fat genes" we have, those genes did not manifest themselves in obesity until the environmental and cultural factors were right for such manifestation. Likewise, although smoking is 53 percent heritable, there were no smokers in Europe before tobacco was brought there from the New World, and smoking rates in America have declined in recent years, due, presumably, to anti-smoking laws, high taxes on tobacco, health warnings on tobacco products, and other societal influences.

Similarly, it seems likely that the "gay gene" has been able to survive over the generations because in the past, cultural and environmental factors did not permit it to manifest itself in ways that affect reproduction. Perhaps it manifested itself in bisexual behavior or in a greater ability to form nonsexual friendships with other men. Perhaps it manifested itself in a greater tendency to join minority religious, social, or political movements. Or perhaps it did not manifest itself at all.

In sum, the scientific evidence suggests that the essentialist view of sexual orientation is wrong because sexual orientation, unlike race, disability, or age, is not wholly determined by genes, germs, the passage of time, or other uncontrollable factors. Rather, male sexual orientation, like obesity, smoking, intelligence, longevity, and many other behavior-related human characteristics, is determined by a combination of genetic and cultural factors, plus, unless you are a strict determinist (you have to go to college a long time to be a strict determinist), some element of human choice. Presumably female sexual orientation is determined by the same types of factors, although it would appear that genetic factors have a lesser role.

The Historical Evidence. It is clear from the historical record that sexual attitudes, preferences, and practices among heterosexuals have varied widely over time and from place to place. Virtually every imaginable variety of personal appearance or style of clothing has been considered “sexy” at one time and place or another. Tattoos, body piercings, decorative scarring, skull flattening, foot binding, thin, fat, curvy, flat, long hair, short hair, nudity, clothing, long skirts, short skirts, wide ties, narrow ties, bell-bottoms, peg-legs, high waists, hip-huggers, and, yes, even polyester leisure suits with top stitching have all had their day and will probably have their day again. Also, types of sexual practices that heterosexuals engage in vary widely over time and among social and economic classes.⁶¹

In particular, sexual attitudes and behavior among heterosexuals have undergone a revolution in the United States over the last century. To take a simple example: in 1900, the percentage of nineteen-year-old unmarried white women with sexual experience was around 6 percent. By 1991, the percentage had risen to around 74 percent.⁶² Hence, although premarital sex has always been with us, it seems fair to conclude that the likelihood that any particular woman will engage in premarital sex is determined more by cultural influences than by genetics or any other form of predisposition.

Since the recognition of gay and lesbian studies as a legitimate scholarly pursuit, a mountain of studies has been produced considering the history of homosexuality.⁶³ These studies suggest that sexual attitudes, preferences, and practices among homosexuals have, if anything, varied even more widely over time and place than have sexual attitudes, preferences, and practices among heterosexuals. In *Homosexuality and Civilization*, from which I have drawn most of the historical information regarding homo-

sexuality in this part of the article, Louis Crompton summarizes most of what historians have discovered (or speculated) about human homosexuality through 1810. Although Crompton rejects Foucault's view that the homosexual did not exist "as a person" before the term was coined in 1864 and asserts that modern gays and lesbians may claim brotherhood and sisterhood with the homosexuals of the past,⁶⁴ his book shows that, for the most part, the homosexuality of earlier times was very different from the homosexuality of today.⁶⁵

In the first place, it appears that there were very few lesbians in earlier times:

Anyone who attempts to tell the story of homosexuality faces a frustrating reality, however. Apart from Sappho and some brief references in Lucian and Martial, lesbians hardly appear in the literature of the classical world. Though they become objects of theological opprobrium in the Middle Ages, only in the seventeenth century are full-length portraits possible, as in the case of Queen Christina, and not until the end of the eighteenth century do social groups come into view. Indeed, only in the last three decades have lesbians occupied the stage in numbers approximating their male counterparts.⁶⁶

Second, male homosexuality was apparently rare in many ancient societies; and in the societies in which it was common, most of the male homosexuals we read about (particularly during ancient times or in non-European cultures) would, using modern terminology, be classified as bisexuals, pedophiles, and/or transvestites, or partners of the same—not groups that most modern gays would identify with.

Crompton comments:

The ancient Greeks had no word that corresponded to our word "homosexual." *Paidierastia*, the closest they came to it, meant literally "boy love," that is, a relation between an older male and someone younger, usually a youth between the ages of fourteen and twenty. The older man was called the *erastes* or lover. Ideally, it was his duty to be the boy's teacher and protector and serve as a model of courage, virtue, and wisdom to his beloved, or *eromenos*, whose attraction lay in his beauty, his youth, and his promise of future moral, intellectual, and physical excellence.⁶⁷

Among the Spartans, pedophilia was apparently almost universal. A boy was taken from his family at age seven and lived in a military barracks until he was thirty. During this time, he was expected to accept an older male lover and mentor; and when he got older, to choose a boy himself to love and mentor.⁶⁸ Pedophilia was also widespread in Athens. According

to John Boswell, a late professor of history at Yale: "The vast amount of homoerotic cultural paraphernalia at Athens—sculpture, painting, vase inscriptions, graffiti, terminology, law, literature, etc.—makes it seem that a majority (if not almost the whole) of the adult male population was involved in homosexual relationships and feelings."⁶⁹

Man-boy love among the Greeks was associated with military valor, and one of the most famous military units in Greek history, the sacred band of Thebes, was made up of experienced soldiers and their younger lovers. While sex between adult males was not unknown, it was considered a shame for an adult man to take the "passive" role in sexual relations with another man, and effeminacy was despised. Moreover, although exclusive homosexuality among the Greeks was not unknown, probably most Greeks who loved boys also married women and had children.⁷⁰

Since man-boy love is not clearly evident in Homer, scholars have wondered how it was introduced to the Greeks. One popular hypothesis is that pederasty was part of the culture of the Dorian tribes who conquered much of the Peloponnesus and a number of Greek islands in the twelfth and eleventh centuries B.C. The Dorians drove many of the original inhabitants, the Ionians, eastward to Asia Minor, but left intact certain Ionian settlements. This hypothesis is bolstered by the fact that man-boy love played a more central role in the cultures of Dorian communities such as Sparta and Crete than it did in some other Greek communities.⁷¹

The only kinds of homosexual relationships the Romans accepted without reservation were relationships between masters and slaves, with the masters taking the "dominant" role. It was considered a great dishonor for a free man to take the "passive" role. The Romans, like the Greeks, generally showed a preference for boys, and most Romans who had sex with boys probably also had sex with women.⁷²

The ancient Jews were hostile to homosexuality, and there are few references to its practice in the Old Testament. However, the Old Testament refers some half-dozen times to *kadesh* (plural *kedeshim*), which literally means "consecrated one" or "holy one," but which is translated in the King James Version as "sodomite."⁷³ Crompton speculates that the *kedeshim* were transvestite priest/prostitutes similar to those who served in the temples of various Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cults during classical times. If Crompton is right, that would have associated male homosexuality with pagan religious practices, which (according to

Crompton) would help to explain the draconian penalty for male homosexual acts set forth in Leviticus 20:13.⁷⁴

Classical Chinese emperors and noblemen often took male (mostly young) lovers, but the idea of a homosexual identity was rare in China, where marriage was considered a sacred duty. In ancient China, male love affairs were generally considered to be elegant diversions, rather than the ennobling experiences associated with Greek pederasty.⁷⁵

A culture of boy love developed in pre-twentieth-century Japan that mirrors Greek pedophilia in some respects. Boy love was apparently common among monks (who were forbidden sexual relations with women) and also among the samurai. In some cases, an adult samurai would take a young male lover and assume responsibility for his education and training. Boy prostitution was apparently widespread, particularly in connection with certain types of theater; and some men became so attached to boy prostitutes that they shunned sexual contact with women.⁷⁶

Among some Native American tribes, it was common for some men to dress as females, take on female roles, and, in some cases, “marry” other men, who took the male role. The men who took the female role are called *berdaches*. However, many Native American tribes were hostile to homosexuality and did not have a *berdache* tradition.⁷⁷

In pre-Islamic times, homosexuality was apparently little in evidence among the Bedouins of Arabia. However, once the Arabs settled down in Spain, a substantial literature of man-boy love developed. Authors wrote romantic poetry openly expressing their love for boys, while at the same time (since the Qur’an prohibits sexual relations between persons of the same gender) loudly protesting their chastity.⁷⁸

David Halperin, a gay activist, classics scholar, and professor of English at the University of Michigan, describes four distinct “discursive traditions” in the history of premodern male sexual classification: (1) effeminacy (which involved gender deviance but not necessarily same-sex contact; many effeminates preferred sexual relations with women); (2) pedophilia, or active sodomy (which was sometimes a sexual preference but was not considered a sexual orientation and was often considered normal and manly); (3) inversion, or a desire for passive sexual contact with other men (which, in an adult, was generally considered shameful); and (4) male friendship and love (which, though often expressed in very romantic terms, did not ordinarily involve sexual contact). None of these traditions corresponds very closely with the modern “discursive tradition”

of homosexuality (which is considered to be a sexual orientation, can involve both active and passive sexual contact, and does not necessarily involve effeminacy).⁷⁹

Once Christianity came to power in the fourth century A.D., Christian rulers began enacting laws to suppress homosexuality, and detailed descriptions of the attitudes and practices of homosexuals in Western societies became less common. In 342, the Roman co-emperors Constantius and Constans adopted a law that punished passive male homosexuals. In the sixth century, the Byzantine emperor Justinian adopted legislation that punished both active and passive male homosexuals and carried out the first verified executions of homosexuals in the Christian Greek world.⁸⁰

In medieval Europe, draconian laws were enacted in many countries punishing male homosexuality, bestiality, and, later, lesbianism. Eventually some executions were carried out under these laws. Since torture was routinely used to elicit confessions and since the properties of convicted "sodomites" were often forfeited to the state, no doubt innocent victims were executed. For example, in the fourteenth century, Philip IV of France used the sodomy laws to bring down the Knights Templar and to appropriate their vast holdings.⁸¹

Many executions for sodomy were carried out in Italy during the Renaissance. However, man-boy love was rediscovered in Florence, where enforcement of anti-sodomy laws was sporadic. Many of the most important Italian Renaissance artists, including Donatello, Botticelli, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Cellini, and Caravaggio, are rumored to have loved boys.⁸²

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, several hundred men, many of them priests, were executed in Spain for sodomy. Many of the victims were tried by the Spanish Inquisition. The Spanish carried their attitudes about homosexuality with them to the New World, where they exterminated many Native Americans who were suspected of sodomy.⁸³

Crompton estimates that about 150 people were executed for sodomy in France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, during that period, a significant bisexual/homosexual subculture developed in France among the noble classes.⁸⁴

In the meantime, homosexuality was much less evident in England than in France. A law against "buggery" was passed by Henry VIII in 1533, but very few charges were brought under the law until the eigh-

teenth and nineteenth centuries. England did, however, have at least two apparently bisexual kings during the seventeenth century (James I and William II), one great poet-dramatist who was rumored to be homosexual (Christopher Marlowe), and another great poet-dramatist who wrote love poetry addressed to both sexes (Shakespeare).⁸⁵

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, a significant homosexual subculture had developed in Paris, which was not limited to the aristocratic classes. Although many arrests were made for sodomy, there were few executions; and, in 1791, sodomy was decriminalized in France.⁸⁶ In Prussia, Frederick the Great, himself probably a homosexual, encouraged the moderation of laws against sodomy.⁸⁷ In England, however, the discovery of a significant homosexual subculture in London led to a number of executions.⁸⁸ The Dutch also executed at least seventy-five convicted sodomites during the eighteenth century. However, sodomy was decriminalized in the Netherlands when it was annexed by France in 1810.⁸⁹

As previously discussed, the modern essentialist concept of homosexuality was developed during the second half of the nineteenth century through the work of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and others. Homosexuals, it was decided, were not simply people who, for whatever reason, engaged in sexual acts with others of the same gender; they were different, in essence, from heterosexuals.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, many homosexuals in the United States were presumably “in the closet.” With the sexual revolution and the gay rights movement, homosexuals became more open in their behavior, established gay neighborhoods, and invented a gay culture. Initially, that culture involved considerable flamboyant gender inversion; later, gender inversion was deemphasized, and many homosexuals today consider themselves identical to heterosexuals in every way except for sexual orientation. During the 1970s and early 1980s, the culture included, for many male homosexuals, a promiscuous lifestyle. After the coming of the AIDS epidemic, safer sex practices were adopted by many, promiscuity probably declined, and homosexuals began talking about same-sex marriage.

My mother, who was born in 1928, first heard the word “homosexual” when she was about twenty and feels certain that nobody she knew in high school ever adopted a homosexual lifestyle. I never knew any homosexuals in high school but later found out that at least three of the people I knew in high school had subsequently adopted a homosexual lifestyle. My

younger children, who are now in high school, can name several classmates who openly identify themselves as homosexual. According to a number of studies reviewed by Ritch Savin-Williams, chair of Cornell University's Human Development Department, in the 1960s gay men first remembered desiring other males at an average age of fourteen; it was seventeen for lesbians. But by the 1990s, the average had dropped to ten for gays and twelve for lesbians.⁹⁰

The vast diversity of homosexual expression in the historical record poses certain conceptual difficulties for the essentialists. The first is a definitional problem: What counts as homosexuality, and what doesn't? Then once that question is answered, why does homosexuality seem to appear in some cultures and time periods, and not in others, or more frequently in some cultures and time periods than in others?

Some essentialists deal with the definitional difficulty by claiming that everybody (particularly everybody famous) who ever had (or wanted) a sexual relationship with another individual of the same gender was homosexual. Others, more sensitive to the modern legal and cultural distaste for pedophilia, claim that the Greek and Roman pedophiles were not "true homosexuals"; the "true homosexuals," presumably, were largely omitted from the historical record. At least one essentialist (Boswell) claims that the ancient records have been misunderstood—that when the text says "boy," it really means "beautiful man."⁹¹

As to the frequency difficulty, an essentialist could argue that the historical record is incomplete—that true homosexuals have existed in all societies at all times but that, due to prejudice and persecution, their identities have been repressed and/or their stories unrecorded. Or one could argue that the gene (or other natural cause for homosexuality) is more prevalent in some societies than in others. I can only respond that these arguments are based on faith or politics, not on evidence.

The nonessentialist position, on the other hand, provides a simple explanation for the vast diversity of sexual expression, both heterosexual and homosexual, that we find in the historical record: Although a desire for sexual expression may develop naturally in most people (particularly males), what we find sexually attractive and how we channel our desires for sexual expression are largely determined by culture; and the categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality themselves are cultural constructs.⁹²

In sum, both the scientific and the historical evidence for the

nonessentialist view of sex in general, and sexual orientation in particular, are convincing. While there have probably always been some males who have had sex with other males, the percentages of the male population who engaged in such activities, the ages at which they engaged in such activities, the cultural and psychological meanings they attached to such activities, and also, possibly, the types of males who were attracted to such activities, have varied widely over time and from culture to culture. Lesbianism, on the other hand, appears to be mostly a cultural product of the last century.

The Subjective Evidence Reconsidered

How, then, do we account for the subjective evidence for the essentialist view—for the fact that most homosexuals, both male and female, feel that their sexual orientation is more part of their essence than, say, their weight, their tendency to take risks, or their tendency to smoke? I by no means question their sincerity, nor do I wish to suggest that a homosexual orientation is always (or often) consciously chosen, or, once it is established, that it can easily be changed.⁹³ Also, I don't intend to question the validity of all self-knowledge that is derived from experience or reflection. We all, at one time or another, accept a certain view of truth, ourselves, and our relationships with God and each other on the basis of experience and reflection.

I must point out, however, that even our deepest insights are influenced by culture and the environment. Even our memories are subject to manipulation—sometimes with tragic results, as in the case of individuals who, by the power of suggestion, have “recovered” vivid memories of being abducted by aliens or molested for years in Satanic rituals.⁹⁴ Very few among us are true prophets or revolutionaries; in fashioning our political and religious views and in deciding who we are, we generally end up following one or more of the patterns available to us in the culture of our times. Thus, every time a new medical or psychological condition is named, a certain number of individuals suddenly “discover” that they have the condition.

Carl Elliott, in an *Atlantic Monthly* cover story,⁹⁵ discussed two relatively new psychological conditions, “apotemnophilia,” or an attraction to the idea of being an amputee, and “acrotomophilia,” or a sexual attraction to amputees. According to Elliott, these conditions have spread in recent years, fueled by the internet. Individuals who have apotemnophilia often

claim that they have always wanted to be amputees, that inside, they are amputees, and that they need to have one or more limbs amputated to achieve emotional or sexual fulfillment. Elliott compares these phenomena with fugue state (a psychological condition involving a loss of identity and a need to travel that was much written about in the early 1900s but which is now less discussed) and multiple personality disorder (a condition that was popular during the 1970s but which has since fallen out of favor). Regarding the spread of psychological phenomena, Elliott postulates:

I am simplifying a very complex and subtle argument, but the basic idea should be clear. By regarding a phenomenon as a psychiatric diagnosis—treating it, reifying it in psychiatric diagnostic manuals, developing instruments to measure it, inventing scales to rate its severity, establishing ways to reimburse the costs of its treatment, encouraging pharmaceutical companies to search for effective drugs, directing patients to support groups, writing about possible causes in journals—psychiatrists may be unwittingly colluding with broader cultural forces to contribute to the spread of a mental disorder.

Suppose doctors started amputating the limbs of apotemnophiles. Would that contribute to the spread of the desire? Could we be faced with an epidemic of people wanting their limbs cut off? Most people would say, Clearly not. Most people do not want their limbs cut off. It is a horrible thought. The fact that others are getting their limbs cut off is no more likely to make these people want to lose their own than state executions are to make people want to be executed. And if by some strange chance more people did ask to have their limbs amputated, that would be simply because more people with the desire were encouraged to “come out” rather than suffer in silence.

I’m not so sure. Clinicians and patients alike often suggest that apotemnophilia is like gender-identity disorder, and that amputation is like sex-reassignment surgery. Let us suppose they are right. Fifty years ago the suggestion that tens of thousands of people would someday want their genitals surgically altered so that they could change their sex would have been ludicrous. But it has happened. The question is why. One answer would have it that this is an ancient condition, that there have always been people who fall outside the traditional sex classifications, but that only during the past forty years or so have we developed the surgical and endocrinological tools to fix the problem.

But it is possible to imagine another story: that our cultural and historical conditions have not just revealed transsexuals but created them. That is, once “transsexual” and “gender-identity disorder” and “sex-reassignment surgery” became common linguistic currency, more people began conceptualizing and interpreting their experience in these terms. They be-

gan to make sense of their lives in a way that hadn't been available to them before, and to some degree they actually became the kinds of people described by these terms.⁹⁶

Although Elliott does not do so (he is, after all, writing for the *Atlantic Monthly*), it would seem logical to extend his postulate to homosexuality, as well as to transsexuality. People at all times and in all cultures develop feelings of attraction for other people, some of whom may be of the same gender. Whether those feelings are interpreted as sexual and how people act on those feelings may depend largely on the cultural environment in which they live.

But I digress. My point is that the scientific and historical evidence for the nonessentialist view of sexual orientation is strong, and the subjective evidence for the essentialist view is not conclusive. And the fact that it may be difficult to change homosexual orientation once it has been established is not dispositive either; many patterns of human thought and behavior are difficult to change once they have been established. (I can personally attest to the difficulty of changing my patterns of eating and exercise sufficiently to bring my level of body fat within the range that was normal for my grandparents.)

If the nonessentialist view is correct, then it seems likely that the adoption of same-sex marriage would tend to increase the numbers of individuals who adopt a homosexual lifestyle. How dramatic would this effect be? Nobody knows. Perhaps we have already reached the point of saturation in the United States. But it is also possible that the effect would be significant, if only because the adoption of same-sex marriage would signal that, once and for all, society has accepted homosexuality as legally and morally the equivalent of heterosexuality.

Conclusion

To sum up:

1. While existing constitutional principles might logically be extended to mandate same-sex marriage, the courts should refrain from doing so because such an extension would do violence to the intentions of the constitutional framers and outrage a significant portion of the population, thereby tending to bring the judiciary into disrepute, overly politicize the judicial selection process, and make the nation less one ruled by laws and majorities and more one ruled by judges.
2. The Bible clearly sanctifies traditional marriage and condemns

sexual relations between individuals of the same gender, so the adoption of same-sex marriage would be a sacrilege to many conservative Christians and Jews.

3. Adopting same-sex marriage would likely further weaken the institution of traditional marriage and increase the numbers of individuals who adopt a homosexual lifestyle, both of which would be bad for society.

Fortunately, American society has, for the most part, moved beyond hating, fearing, and persecuting homosexuals. Must we now move beyond sympathy, tolerance, and understanding, and take the final step of embracing homosexuality by approving same-sex marriage? I hope that we will have the wisdom not to do so.

Also, I hope that our discussions of same-sex marriage can be characterized on both sides by greater honesty and willingness to confront uncomfortable facts, and less of a tendency to demonize persons with an opposing view. Just as I would hope that we who oppose same-sex marriage will follow the admonition of the First Presidency to “reach out with understanding and respect for individuals who are attracted to those of the same gender,”⁹⁷ I would hope that those who support same-sex marriage will recognize that there are many intelligent, honest people of good will who have a differing view.

And finally, in the process of researching and writing this article, I have been struck by the influence that culture has on our lives. Although I believe that traditional marriage and sexual attraction between a man and a woman are ordained by God, they are not inevitable or “natural”⁹⁸ but are subject to impairment or destruction by cultural forces—including, I believe, highly symbolic cultural decisions like the adoption of same-sex marriage. And although I believe that, in an ultimate sense, we are all free agents, it is clear that our choices and our children’s choices are very much influenced by the culture around us. Therefore, the culture wars are not just a political sideshow, but the main show, and we should all be fighting the good fight.

Notes

1. “First Presidency Statement on Same-Gender Marriage,” October 20, 2004, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Newsroom, www.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/v/index.jsp?vnextoid=a1312e636369f010VgnVCM100000176f620aRCRD&vnextchannel=9ae411154963d010VgnVCM1000004e94610aRCRD (accessed March 18, 2007).

2. *Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003).

3. The Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, Spain and South Africa have all enacted legislation permitting same-sex marriage. Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, France, Germany, Finland, Luxembourg, Britain, and various other countries (or parts of other countries) all allow same-sex civil unions or registered partnerships.

4. Vermont, California, New Jersey, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maine, and Washington, D.C., Oregon, and Washington all have some kind of domestic partnership or civil union legislation.

5. In 2005, the California legislature enacted a bill legalizing same-sex marriage, which was vetoed by the governor.

6. 852 P.2d 44 (Haw. 1993).

7. *Brause & Dugan v. Bureau of Vital Statistics*, Alaska Superior Court, Third Judicial District at Anchorage, Case No. 3AN-95-6562 CI (1998).

8. *Goodrich v. Dept. of Public Health*, 440 Mass. 309, 798 N.E.2d 1941 (2003). See also *In re Opinions of the Justices to the Senate*, 803 N.E. 2d 565 (Mass. 2004), in which the Court advised the Massachusetts State Senate that adopting a civil union alternative to same-sex marriage would not pass constitutional muster.

9. *Baker v. Vermont*, 170 Vt. 194, 744 A.2d 864 (1999).

10. The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973), which in my view violated this rule of thumb, has had the effect of overpoliticizing the judicial selection process (witness the Senate confirmation proceedings for Justices John Roberts and Samuel Alito), and has brought the judiciary into disrepute among large segments of American society. The Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1953), on the other hand, did not violate this rule of thumb because, although controversial at the time it was decided, it was consistent with the views of at least some of the framers of the constitutional provision it applied—specifically, the Fourteenth Amendment, which was adopted in 1868 as part of the Reconstruction effort to abolish slavery and afford equal rights to former slaves.

11. See results collected at Polling Report, Inc., "Law and Civil Rights" (2007), www.pollingreport.com/civil.htm (accessed March 18, 2007).

12. I believe that *Reynolds v. U.S.*, 98 U.S. 145 (1878), which upheld the constitutionality of federal legislation outlawing the Mormon practice of polygamy, was wrongly decided. However, it is important to note that the case turned on freedom of religion, not on equal protection or privacy issues.

13. Muslims can make a similar argument against same-sex marriage using passages from the Qur'an. For example, Sura [Chapter] 4:15-16 states: "If

any of your women is guilty of unnatural offence, bring four of your witnesses to give evidence; if they testify against them, retain them in the houses until death, or until God provide some other way for them. If two men among you are guilty of such acts then punish both of them. But if they repent and reform, let them be, for God accepts repentance and is merciful." Also, Sura 7:80–81 states: "And we sent Lot, who said to his people: 'Why do you commit this lecherous act which none in the world has committed before? In preference to women you satisfy your lust with men. Indeed you are a people who are guilty of excess.'" *Islam: The Qur'an: A Contemporary Translation*, Vol. 3 of *Sacred Writings*, trans. by Ahmed Ali (New York: Book-of-the-Month Club, 1992).

14. John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 100–106; Eric Marcus, *Is It a Choice? Answers to 300 of the Most Frequently Asked Questions about Gay and Lesbian People* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), 133–35.

15. Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 33. Crompton is professor of English emeritus at the University of Nebraska and co-founder of the Gay and Lesbian Caucus of the Modern Language Association. *Homosexuality and Civilization* was a 2004 Independent Publisher Book Awards Finalist in the Gay/Lesbian Category and a 2005 *Choice Magazine* Outstanding Academic Title.

16. *Ibid.*, chaps. 2, 5–7, 9–10, 12, 14.

17. James Q. Wilson, *The Marriage Problem: How Culture Has Weakened Families* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), 1–21; also see Linda J. Waite, "The Importance of Marriage Is Being Overlooked," *USA Today*, January 1999, 46–47.

18. Maggie Gallagher, "Third Thoughts on Divorce," *National Review*, March 25, 2002, 50.

19. Marcus, *Is It a Choice?*, 10.

20. Phillip Longman, *The Empty Cradle: How Falling Birthrates Threaten World Prosperity* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 15–27.

21. Wilson, *The Marriage Problem*, 43–63.

22. Centers for Disease Control, *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*, 2004, Vol. 16 (Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control, 2005), 1–46.

23. Some commentators have argued that the adoption of same-sex marriage might convince more male homosexuals to live in monogamous, or semi-monogamous, relationships, and therefore be less likely to spread the

AIDS virus. Jonathan Rauch, *Gay Marriage: Why It Is Good for Gays, Good for Straights, and Good for America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2004), chap. 8. This sounds like wishful thinking. Homosexuals who wish to live a monogamous lifestyle can do so, with or without same-sex marriage, and those who do not wish to live a monogamous lifestyle are unlikely to change unless and until society imposes heavier legal or societal penalties on nonmonogamous homosexual activity, and I don't see a groundswell of support for that development among the advocates of same-sex marriage. Also, the Massachusetts experience suggests that U.S. lesbians are far more likely than gays to marry. Even though gays presumably outnumber lesbians by a considerable margin, of the total number of same-sex marriages performed in Massachusetts during 2004 and 2005, 64% involved women. Dan Ring, "8,100 Gay, Lesbian Couples Marry after 2004 Decision," *Springfield Republican*, May 17, 2006, 222. masslive.com/metrowest/republican/index.ssf/base/news-0/114787085559880.xml&coll=1 (accessed March 18, 2007).

24. Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage: A History* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2005), 33–34. The exception is the Na people, a society of approximately 30,000 people living in the Yunan province of southwestern China. Among the Na, the basic family unit is comprised of brothers and sisters, and the children of the sisters.

25. *Ibid.*, chaps. 1–8.

26. *Ibid.*, 263–64; also see Auriana Ojeda, ed., Preface, *The Family* (Farmington Hills, Mo.: Greenhaven Press, 2003), 17.

27. Barbara LeBey, "American Families Are Drifting Apart," *USA Today*, September 2001, 20–22, quoted in Ojeda, *The Family*, 20.

28. Gallagher, "Third Thoughts on Divorce," quoted in Ojeda, *The Family*, 37–38.

29. Coontz, *Marriage: A History*, chaps. 9–14.

30. Wilson, *The Marriage Problem*, 175–77.

31. *Ibid.*, 173–74.

32. Rauch, *Gay Marriage*, 86–103.

33. In 1989, Denmark adopted the first legislation in the world granting same-sex registered partners rights similar to those of married couples. Norway followed with similar legislation in 1993, and Sweden in 1994. Between 1989 and 2004, the percentage of births outside marriage in Denmark stayed about the same—between 44.6% and 46.9%. Between 1993 and 2004, the percent of births outside marriage in Norway grew from 44.4% to 51.3%, and between 1994 and 2002, the percent of births outside marriage in Sweden grew from 52% to 56%. Opponents of same-sex marriage point to the

Scandinavian example as evidence of the possible negative impact same-sex marriage could have on traditional marriage in the United States, while advocates of same-sex marriage argue that, since the adoption of registered partner laws in Scandinavia, the decline of traditional marriage has slowed, or, by some measures, been slightly reversed there. See William Eskridge Jr. and Darren Spedale, *Gay Marriage: For Better or Worse? What We've Learned from the Evidence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), especially the demographic information in Appendices 4–6. While traditional marriage is in decline in the United States, it is in greater decline in Scandinavia and has been since before these laws were adopted. By way of comparison, the percentage of total births in the United States to unwed mothers rose to 37 percent in 2005, an all-time high. Associated Press, “Nearly 4 in 10 U.S. Babies Born Out of Wedlock,” posted November 21, 2006, www.msnbc.com/id/15835429 (accessed March 18, 2007). It may be appropriate to view the adoption of the registered partner laws in Scandinavia more as a symptom than as a cause of traditional marriage’s decline there. The extent to which the Scandinavian experience is useful in predicting the possible effects of the adoption of same-sex marriage in the United States is not clear.

34. Marcus, *Is It a Choice?*, 11–19. I take Marcus, whose book features an endorsement from “Dear Abby” on the front cover, to be an accurate purveyor of the received wisdom.

35. Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality*, 2d ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), 7. Weeks is a gay activist and executive dean of the Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences at London South Bank University. The embedded quotation is Irving Singer, *The Goals of Human Sexuality* (London: Wildwood House, 1973), 15.

36. *Ibid.*

37. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 103. Foucault died of AIDS in 1984.

38. *Ibid.*, 103–5.

39. *Ibid.*, 103.

40. *Ibid.*, 43. The term “homosexuality” first appeared in print in 1864. David Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 106.

41. The essentialist/nonessentialist argument is also important to the constitutional arguments surrounding homosexuality and same-sex marriage. If the essentialists are right and homosexuality is an immutable trait like race or gender that individuals are locked into by accident of birth or other uncon-

trollable factors, then legal classifications based on sexual orientation should arguably be submitted to heightened judicial scrutiny, just as classifications based on race or gender are.

42. Marcus, *Is It a Choice?*, 11.

43. Dean Hamer and Peter Copeland, *Living with Our Genes* (New York: Anchor Books, 1998), 186. Hamer is the discoverer of the "gay gene." I discuss his scientific work below.

44. Hubert Kennedy, "Karl Heinrich Ulrich: First Theorist of Homosexuality" in *Science and Homosexualities*, edited by Vernon A. Rosario (New York: Routledge, 1997), 26–45.

45. Alice Dreger, "Hermaphrodites in Love: The Truth of the Gonads," in *Science and Homosexualities*, 46–66; Margaret Gibson, "Clitoral Corruption: Body Metaphors and American Doctors, Constructions of Female Homosexuality, 1870-1900," in *ibid.*, 108–32.

46. James D. Steakley, "*Per scientiam adjustitiam*: Magnus Hirshfeld and the Sexual Politics of Innate Homosexuality," in *Science and Homosexualities*, 133–54.

47. Harry Oosterhuis, "Richard von Krafft-Ebing's 'Step-Children of Nature': Psychiatry and the Making of Homosexual Identity," in *Science and Homosexualities*, 67–88.

48. Julian Carter, "Normality, Whiteness, Authorship: Evolutionary Sexology and the Primitive Pervert," in *Science and Homosexualities*, 155–76.

49. Stephanie H. Kenan, "Who Counts When You're Counting Homosexuals? Hormones and Homosexuality in Mid-Twentieth-Century America," in *Science and Homosexualities*, 197–218.

50. Richard C. Pillard, "The Search for a Genetic Influence on Sexual Orientation," in *Science and Homosexualities*, 226–29.

51. Marcus, *Is It a Choice?*, 16–21.

52. Garland E. Allen, "The Double-Edged Sword of Genetic Determinism: Social and Political Agendas in Genetic Studies of Homosexuality, 1940–1994," in *Science and Homosexualities*, 242–70.

53. Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

54. Jennifer Terry, "The Seductive Power of Science," in *Science and Homosexualities*, 271–95.

55. Hamer and Copeland, *Living with Our Genes*, 194–95.

56. *Ibid.*, 196–97.

57. *Ibid.*, 197.

58. Ibid., 187–88.

59. Ibid., 188–89.

60. Ibid., 198–99.

61. For an exhaustive survey of the varieties of sexual attitudes and practices among mid-twentieth-century Americans of different ages and social classes, see Alfred Kinsey, Wardell Pomeroy, and Clyde Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1948); and Alfred Kinsey, Wardell Pomeroy, Clyde Martin, and Paul Gebhard, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1953).

62. Ben Wattenberg et al., “The Family,” Online Book, Sec. 4.2, “The First Measured Century: An Illustrated Guide to Trends in America, 1900–2000,” PBS Programs, www.pbs.org/fmc/book/4family2.htm (accessed January 16, 2006).

63. See Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990), his *How to Do the History of Homosexuality*, Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, and the multiple sources cited in these books.

64. Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, xiv.

65. In this article, I generally use *homosexual*, *gay*, and *lesbian* to describe both modern and ancient forms of sexual expression between individuals of the same gender, even though, from a nonessentialist point of view, it is technically improper to use modern terms to describe ancient practices or classifications.

66. Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, xiii. Also, the few ancient writers who discuss women who are sexually attracted to other women generally refer not to “lesbians” as that term is commonly used today, but instead to “tribades,” or women who assume a masculine identity, appearance, and sexual style in their relations with other women. See Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality*, 51–53.

67. Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, 3–4.

68. Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization: Vol. 2, The Life of Greece* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1939), 81–85.

69. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 54.

70. Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, 1–31, 49–78.

71. Ibid., 6–7.

72. Ibid., 79–110. See also Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 61–87.

73. Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, 39.
74. Ibid., 32–48.
75. Ibid., 213–44.
76. Ibid., 411–43.
77. Ibid., 41, 314–20.
78. Ibid., 161–72.
79. Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality*, 104–37.
80. Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, 131–49.
81. Ibid., 178–212.
82. Ibid., 245–90.
83. Ibid., 291–320.
84. Ibid., 321–60.
85. Ibid., 361–410.
86. Ibid., 444–51, 501.
87. Ibid., 504–12.
88. Ibid., 451–62.
89. Ibid., 462–71.
90. John Cloud, “The Battle over Gay Teens,” *Time*, October 10, 2005, 44.
91. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 28–30.
92. The fact that Halperin, Foucault, and certain other historians of homosexuality support the nonessentialist position should not be taken as an indication that they would oppose same-sex marriage. On the contrary, I suspect that they would support it. The essentialist-nonessentialist debate is mostly carried on within the gay and lesbian intellectual communities; and from a political perspective, it is probably more a debate about means than ends. I suspect that essentialists generally want gays and lesbians to be viewed as vulnerable minorities in need of special legal protections, while non-essentialists generally believe that, in the long run, gays and lesbians will be better served by trying to deconstruct the categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality, leaving us all free to pursue love and pleasure as we see fit.
93. Nor do I wish to suggest that it is impossible to change. The National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) website (www.narth.com; accessed March 19, 2007) summarizes scientific research suggesting that, in many cases, it is possible for highly motivated homosexuals to change sexual orientation. Of particular note is Robert Spitzer, “Can Some Gay Men and Lesbians Change Their Sexual Orientation? 200 Participants Reporting a Change from Homosexual to Heterosexual Orienta-

tion," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 32, no. 5 (October 2003): 403–17. Spitzer is a professor of psychiatry at Columbia University. However, I have not read the research and advance no policy recommendations regarding attempts to change established homosexual orientation; my article focuses only on same-sex marriage.

94. Elizabeth Loftus, "Make-Believe Memories," *American Psychologist*, November 2003, 867–73. Loftus is a professor at the University of California, Irvine, in the departments of Psychology and Social Behavior, Criminology, Law and Society, and Cognitive Sciences.

95. Carl Elliott, "A New Way to Be Mad," *Atlantic Monthly*, December 2000, 72–84. Elliott is a professor at the Center for Bioethics, Department of Pediatrics, University of Minnesota Medical School, and a professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Minnesota.

96. Ibid.

97. "First Presidency Statement on Same-Gender Marriage."

98. As King Benjamin teaches in the Book of Mormon, "the natural man is an enemy to God" (Mosiah 3:19).

A Case for Same-Sex Marriage: Reply to Randolph Muhlestein

H. Wayne Schow

I come at this topic primarily from an existential rather than from an ideological position. I had a son who was gay. Brad came out to his mother and me when he was twenty. At that time, I could hardly have been more viscerally antipathetic to homosexuals, and so accepting his assertion was simply unthinkable. Since he was an upstanding young man—good student, good citizen, good Latter-day Saint—since I perceived our family relationships as healthy, and since I loved him, I was determined to help him understand that he was just temporarily mixed up and that he could overcome his delusions. He, on the other hand, was fiercely determined to help me understand his reality; and however difficult I might find that, he wanted desperately to believe that ultimately I could be open-minded and fair.

In the educational struggle that ensued over the next eight years before his death from AIDS, he proved to be the prevailing teacher. I read the best literature on the subject I could find; I studied the views of professionals; I allowed myself to get to know and observe many homosexuals and their family members, and to hear their stories; above all, I listened to and watched Brad and tried to view the matter as clearly as I could from his point of view. In the long run, he moved me nearly 180 degrees.

My long-standing bias against homosexual persons was a result of my having absorbed from my religious and social culture a number of closed premises—without bothering to examine them. As I did the work of fact-finding, observation, and analysis—and as I looked hard at my religious principles to determine which of them were really relevant to this matter—little by little the problematic aspects of homosexuality mostly

melted away. Now I find it hard to believe that I once found this natural phenomenon so threatening, so intolerable.

Brad had gone to live in West Hollywood because he felt like an outcast in Idaho and Utah. (This was in 1979.) He wanted to explore his sexual identity in an accepting environment, where he and others like him could live openly. Unfortunately, he arrived in California just as the AIDS epidemic was beginning and before it had been identified. He contracted the virus. After several years, he returned to Utah to study. But by then it was too late. And so he came home finally, living with us for his last nineteen months as AIDS, now ascendant, completed its deadly work.

As a young adult, what he had desperately wanted was to find a committed male companion with whom he could fashion a stable, settled life. But nothing in the social or religious structures around him in Pocatello, Salt Lake City, and Logan encouraged or supported that. Quite the contrary.

I so wish fair treatment of homosexual persons, including the possibility of gay marriage, had been available to Brad here in Mormon country a quarter century ago. Had it been, had we all not put stumbling blocks in his path, I think he would not have gone to Los Angeles when he did, might well as a result have avoided contracting AIDS, and been still with us today, he and a partner together, working in their professions, contributing to society, experiencing the fulfilling life that would have been possible. I am haunted still by what might have been. I regret that, at that crucial time, I lacked the vision and the courage to stand up for him.

I state this personal history in fairness to the reader, who can decide for him- or herself if my objectivity has been compromised or strengthened by what I have lived and learned.

I

The casual reader who is already predisposed to disapprove of gay marriage will find much appealing in Randolph Muhlestein's argument. On the surface, the latter seems judicious and fair-minded. He takes some pains to avoid the appearance of naive or mean-spirited bias. He makes his case in a civil and restrained fashion. He has done background reading and credited his sources.¹ Like any reasonable man, he acknowledges opposing arguments, frequently admits the limits of his evidence, and mostly avoids claiming more than it will support.

And yet, for all its academic polish, this argument (given my own

persuasions) seems based on narrow readings of secondary sources, on readings and interpretations primarily driven by *a priori* assumptions. At the same time, it ignores significant issues such as fairness and compassion. And ultimately, it is not sufficiently based on primary evidence—in this case direct, careful, extended observation of the real lives of homosexuals. As I appraise it, this article is substantially speculative, its heavily qualified conclusions influenced by fearful assumptions.

If I were asked to describe the principal difference between Muhlestein's approach to this subject and mine, I would say that he is most concerned with how to protect society from homosexuals, while I am most focused on our moral obligation to treat gays and lesbians justly and compassionately.

Muhlestein lays out his argument in terms of (1) constitutional considerations, (2) scriptural authority, and (3) sociological and scientific issues. In the brief section devoted to the first topic, he summarizes the current status of same-sex marriage in the courts, where proponents seem to be making slow but steady progress toward general legalization. Acknowledging that there is no simple way to refute "eloquent" and even "poetic" legal opinions that would justify same-sex marriage in the light of constitutional decisions, he falls back on his own rule of thumb for judicial interpretation: first, would the framers of the constitution(s) "roll over in their graves" if same-sex marriage were found constitutional? And second, would a "significant portion of the population" be "outrage[d]" by such an interpretation? (4)

As Muhlestein explains clearly, constitutions are not fixed in stone. They must be living documents, interpreted and reinterpreted by the judiciary as time passes, as conditions and contexts evolve. If, for example, we wish to speculate about what the framers of the Constitution of the United States would think concerning gay marriage, we should imagine them living not at the end of the eighteenth but rather at the beginning of the twenty-first century, informed by intervening history and contemporary perspectives. I am no lawyer, but my conjecture is that they'd see the matter governed by such inalienable rights as personal "liberty" and the "pursuit of happiness."

As to whether a decision to allow gay marriage might offend a significant majority of today's population, Muhlestein knows well that the framers of our national constitution were much concerned to defuse the potential for a tyrannous majority to impose, unnecessarily and unjustly, on

the interests of minorities. That's why they instituted checks and balances, so that the judiciary could restrain when appropriate not only a zealous, self-interested majority but also their self-interested legislative representatives. And when is such restraint appropriate? When rights or freedoms of minorities are restricted without there being a compelling governmental interest to do so. In my view, no such compelling interest has been convincingly demonstrated by the opponents of gay marriage, including Muhlestein.

Moreover, he should remember that public majority opinion is not a constant. The poll results relative to gay unions that he points to have been changing steadily in recent years, with increasing numbers of respondents shifting to acceptance of gay unions. Frankly, I'm not much impressed by poll results; polls typically oversimplify complex issues, and they invite knee-jerk responses devoid of informed reflection. But if we must have polls, let's revisit the numbers a year or two or five from now and see where we are. Almost certainly, the anti-gay marriage faction will have lost more support.

Ultimately, Muhlestein acknowledges that his legal argument against gay marriage comes down mostly to his belief that the will of the voting majority (currently dominated by the politically energized religious right) should prevail.

The second element of the Muhlestein argument is based on a literal interpretation of several scriptural verses. The most important of them are Jesus's pronouncement that a man and his wife should cleave unto each other and several biblical texts that condemn homosexual intercourse. He therefore concludes that to sanctify sexual relations of any other sort outside heterosexual marriage is (in essence) to "mock God."²

To interpret scripture literally and simplistically—making no allowance for cultural contexts, regarding every scriptural pronouncement as binding for all time—is, generally speaking, to stand on shaky ground. None but an extreme fundamentalist can seriously adopt such a posture. Read the Pentateuch in its entirety and see how unacceptable, according to current values, are many of its prohibitions and draconian punishments. Note that some of the most respected historical figures in the Old Testament had multiple wives and concubines. Note the omnipresent bias against women; note the acceptance of slavery; consider Paul's unfavorable view of marriage. Examples are legion. There is no need to belabor the obvious here.

Thus, a couple of proof-texts from the Bible (read without consideration of situational and cultural contexts) alluding to improper homosexual expression provide no authoritative foundation for denying gay marriage in our time and place. This is particularly true given that, in that earlier culture, homosexual orientation was not generally understood as a given in some persons' nature, as expert opinion now widely regards it. Furthermore, biblical culture apparently never considered the possibility of a committed, monogamous, life-time partnership between two homosexuals.

Muhlestein can hardly do other than acknowledge (as he does) that the literal scriptural references to homosexuality are insufficient of themselves to convince educated religionists, let alone those outside the Judeo-Christian persuasion, and that if the case against same-sex marriage is to prevail, it must find other, persuasive legs to stand on. (A broader appeal to scripture for guidance in this matter is, however, not irrelevant, as I will attempt to show.)

Thus, we come to the main thrust of Muhlestein's argument—based on sociological/scientific assessment—with its two propositions: (1) that same-sex marriage would damage the institution of traditional marriage; and (2) that it would encourage more people to “adopt a homosexual lifestyle” (7). Muhlestein goes to great lengths to establish that the institution of marriage is good for society. He is carrying coals to Newcastle. Who's contesting that? Certainly not the proponents of gay marriage. While the purposes, forms, and expectations associated with marriage have varied not a little over time and in various cultures,³ it has adapted and persisted because in general it promotes social stability and at the same time promotes good outcomes in individual lives.

But viewed from near perspective, this venerable institution seems to be in troubled straits, with relatively fewer people marrying and more marriages failing. Documenting the diminished appeal and health of marriage in the United States, Muhlestein rightly acknowledges that this decline derives from numerous causes. These include the shift from a rural to an increasingly urban economy; the women's movement, with greater educational and employment opportunities for women, enabling them to reject undesired marriages or escape abusive marriages; changing social attitudes regarding unmarried cohabitation and divorce (including the rise of romantic love as a principal basis for marrying, and its lack as sufficient reason, for many, for dissolving marriages); changes in the law allowing

no-fault divorce and equal legal recognition of illegitimate children; development of more reliable methods of birth control and the sexual revolution that in part resulted from it; upward spiraling materialism and the stresses induced by it (two incomes often needed for families to survive or to achieve a higher standard of consumerism); and a gradual decline of perceived theological authority.

If the props that supported traditional marriage have been steadily weakened or removed, gays deserve very little of the blame—and Muhlestein indirectly acknowledges as much. Nevertheless, by denying them access to marriage, he would make them pay a price for the woes of marriage as practiced by heterosexuals. Would gay marriage really have a negative effect on traditional marriage? “Nobody knows,” he concedes (13). Nevertheless, he reasons, since past changes (however unrelated to homosexuality) have created some problems for marriage (he does not mention that they have fixed some as well), let’s not allow any other change. It just *might* also have a negative effect, neither “small [n]or salutary” (13). Don’t bother to consider the particular merits of a proposed change. Let’s not, in other words, attack the real causes for this dip in the popularity of marriage or acknowledge we can’t reverse the historical clock. Instead, let’s pick on the by-standing homosexuals who would very much like a place at the marriage table, the bounties of which they respect. Let’s make a show of pointedly excluding them and forget about real cause and effect.

Well, says Muhlestein, at a minimum, gay marriage would further dissociate marriage from procreation and child-rearing, it might adversely affect the birthrate, and it would give offense to conservative religionists by moving marriage further from the “irrevocable, God-ordained covenant model” (13). Applying some epistemological analysis to that claim of an “irrevocable, God-ordained covenant model” would be useful, and a fruitful place to begin might be the scripturally sanctioned ancient and modern practice of polygamy.

The first of Muhlestein’s objections is indeed a slippery slope. Think of all the heterosexual marriages that, from the outset, are justified on grounds other than procreation—couples who consciously enter marriage choosing not to have children, or couples known to be infertile, or older persons beyond child-bearing years—yet they marry with the unambiguous blessing of Church and society because marriage has other undeniable benefits—emotional, practical, legal—that justify their unions and improve their lives.

As for child-rearing, the typical male/female pattern of parenting does not guarantee good parenting, as many a messed-up adult, looking back, will readily testify. On the other hand, in the challenging real (as opposed to “ideal”) world, children are often reared successfully in “irregular” situations and always have been. The significant variable is not the gender of the nurturing adults so much as the cohesiveness of the family environment and the quality of care, love, commitment, responsible instruction, and good examples the child experiences while growing up. Most reputable academic studies of outcomes for children in gay-parented households conclude that statistically such children do as well as those in families with male/female parents.⁴ Moreover, many of those who would enter gay marriages either already are parents or wish to be, so there would be no necessary dissociation of marriage and child-rearing.

What about Muhlestein’s argument that gay marriage would negatively impact the birthrate? If gay marriage were optional and gay families were officially recognized as families, how many heterosexual couples would decide, for that reason, not to have children? The answer is obvious.⁵ Would the birthrate drop measurably because a few gays, with society’s acceptance, decided to forego heterosexual unions, many of which would be doomed to dissolve or be otherwise unsatisfactory, and enter into same-sex unions? Any decline so occasioned would surely be insignificant.

Furthermore, Muhlestein’s fears that the availability of marriage to gays would make the “gay lifestyle” so attractive that considerable numbers of straight people “might” gravitate to it are unfounded. Only those who genuinely are strongly homosexual will so identify themselves and choose gay marriage. Concern, then, about depressing the birthrate is simply a red herring.⁶

As for gay marriage giving offense to some members of America’s conservative churches, I suggest that those so offended would do well to reexamine the basic tenets of the faith they profess, to which subject I will return.

If we stand back and look carefully at Muhlestein’s polemic, it is possible to see what he is most concerned about: that legalizing gay marriage would likely encourage more people “to adopt a homosexual lifestyle”⁷—and he is just not comfortable with that prospect. He continues: “I suspect that . . . most Americans . . . would prefer . . . that their children not adopt a homosexual lifestyle, and that there not be a dramatic increase in the

numbers of homosexuals generally.” And then he adds, significantly, “I believe that there is good sense in these common attitudes” (7). Why does he add that judgment? As I read his argument, he feels the need to insist that, however much gays must be tolerated, what they *are* is undesirable, bad for society—and it would be best not to encourage them in any significant way.

I must call out that statement for what I think it reveals: sheer prejudice. To say that our country would be better off without increased numbers of homosexuals betrays a bias that exists prior to any concern about marriage *per se*. It shows a failure to recognize that homosexuals support society in the same valuable ways, and in similar degrees, that heterosexuals do. It fails to see that their special sensibilities enable them to make strong contributions particularly—but by no means exclusively—in the helping professions (including teaching, medicine, health, counseling) and the occupational fields of design and the arts. It fails to acknowledge typical, ordinary homosexual persons as hard-working, law-abiding, decent citizens.

I am pained to make this charge of prejudice, but I cannot think that, in the final analysis, it is unwarranted. I believe that for many who oppose gay marriage the issue is not primarily about the institution of marriage *per se*. Defense of traditional marriage is just a symbolic flash-point fueled by what really drives this initiative—a visceral rejection of homosexuality in toto, a denial of its right to be, a disgust at an expression of sexuality and sensibility that is different from the majority.

Short of declaring straight out that homosexual persons are fundamentally flawed and anti-socially oriented, what basis can Muhlestein propose for walling them out, excluding them from rights and opportunities (including marriage) that are commonly available to Americans? His somewhat strained argument is, in effect, to disclaim the importance of biology as a causal factor, to challenge homosexual identity as inborn essence, to assert rather (or at least imply continually) that it is predominantly historically, socially, culturally constructed and thus theoretically susceptible to alteration. And since homosexuality is “adopted” (his word [26])—i.e., deliberately acquired rather than innate—homosexuals neither need nor deserve any recognition of their claims to be different. So why should they be allowed to enter into marriage with one of their own gender? The centrality of this claim as the cornerstone of his argument against gay marriage is evident in that he employs well over half of his essay

attempting to substantiate it. His sustained effort does not persuade me because it is not pursued consistently or evenhandedly.

Muhlestein reviews various attempts over the past century and a half to formulate the etiology of homosexuality. These attempted explanations have been inadequate because, without exception, they failed to account for relevant phenomena related to this complex matter. These outmoded theories are straw men, easily and justifiably knocked over. He then focuses his attention exclusively on what he takes to be the current prevailing theory: genetic linkage to sexual orientation. In particular, he cites the research efforts directed by Dean Hamer, whose line of investigation is still a painstaking work in progress, highly suggestive at this juncture but with questions still to be answered. Muhlestein seems willing to acknowledge a growing consensus among investigators about the relevance of gene theory. As he puts it, "Many other studies [also] suggest that there is a genetic link of one kind or another for male sexual orientation" (18). Notwithstanding, Muhlestein ultimately dismisses genetic implications⁸ and declares the essentialist theory of homosexuality "surprisingly weak" because "scientists and theorists have been unable to devise a satisfactory scientific or medical theory that explains homosexuality as *wholly* the result of genes, germs, accidents, or other factors that are independent of culture" (16; emphasis mine). He subsequently restates this conclusion even more strongly: "The scientific evidence suggests that the essentialist view of sexual orientation is *wrong* because sexual orientation, unlike race, disability, or age, is not *wholly* determined by genes, germs, the passage of time, or other uncontrollable factors" (21; emphasis mine).

At this point, Muhlestein's argument falls into either inadvertent contradiction or obfuscation. He equates biological causes with essentialism, then dismisses essentialism unless biology is the exclusive cause. In spite of his attempt to avoid it, in considering causes of homosexuality he seems at times to fall into the trap of either/or thinking. Either the essentialist etiology is "wholly" the explanation, or it must yield to environmental/cultural causes—which he assumes (perhaps wrongly) are less compelling.

"Indeed," he says, "the scientific theory of homosexuality that is currently most popular allows for a major role for culture and environment" (16). This position actually implies the existence of biological determinants, even given varying definitions about "major." Muhlestein's statement frames the matter misleadingly. While it is true that some leading

experts now describe the etiology of homosexuality as complex, possibly involving multiple causes, I know of no one at the forefront of such investigation who dismisses the importance of biology as a significant influence or determinant in a majority of cases.

The reality is that even if several causes contribute, those which may be called essentialist can still have an unavoidable, and very often the dominant, impact. That is, if one is born with sensibilities or proclivities that incline one powerfully toward a particular orientation, environmental/cultural influences may well reinforce such inborn tendencies. Thus, the multiple-cause theory that Muhlestein espouses (which includes essentialist elements) by no means invalidates the claim that biology is highly significant.

Muhlestein can't have it both ways. Either he must acknowledge candidly that biological determinants are real and present in at least some degree, or he must deny them outright. If he acknowledges them in any significant degree (as at times, in spite of himself, he seems to do), he undermines his own case.

In limiting his discussion of current etiological research to gene theory, Muhlestein omits important evidence. In fact, studies of the relationship of homosexuality and biology are ongoing in a number of other areas. These include hormones, anatomy, brain studies (focusing on both anatomy and function), cognitive studies, and birth order. In researching such complex questions, science moves with deliberate caution; nevertheless, some of the considerable work that has been done is very promising. Readers looking for larger perspective may wish to consult a website, "The Biology of Sexual Orientation," maintained by Simon LeVay, a noted biologist best known for his research on the brain and sexuality. This site provides an overview of theories and research, primarily but not exclusively biological, together with evaluative commentary. LeVay's summary statement reads: "Although quite a few of the findings reported here are inconsistent between studies or await independent replication, my general conclusion is that biological processes, especially the prenatal, hormonally controlled sexual differentiation of the brain, are likely to influence a person's ultimate sexual orientation."⁹

Will anyone who has looked carefully at a wide cross-section of gays and lesbians not admit that, in the case of the former, certain "feminized" physical and behavioral traits are more frequently found than in straight males, and similarly that among lesbians, certain "masculinized" traits are

more prevalent than among straight females?¹⁰ Even while acknowledging that such traits are stereotypical and admit of numerous exceptions, let it also be remembered that stereotypes generally have some real basis. Moreover, it will be observed that these traits generally are natural to their possessors, frequently observed from very early childhood, rather than deliberately cultivated or otherwise gradually acquired; it will be observed that one among several siblings, reared in the same family environment, exposed to the same educational and communal cultural values, will exhibit such gender-atypical behaviors and predilections while the others do not. My point is this: To deny that the statistically wide distribution of such gender-atypical physical and behavioral traits among homosexuals is natural to them and essential in their identity is naive.

What about the evidence of history? "It is clear from the historical record," says Muhlestein, "that sexual attitudes, preferences, and practices among heterosexuals have varied widely over time and from place to place" (21). Furthermore, "studies suggest that sexual attitudes, preferences, and practices among homosexuals have, if anything, varied even more widely" (21–22). He then labors mightily to survey this sexual variety, concluding that the lack of consistency disproves any essentialist basis for homosexuality.

But this argument is a sword that cuts both ways. Let's test his hypothesis by applying it to heterosexuals. Since their sexual attitudes and practices have been varied and inconsistent, influenced by culture, does he really mean seriously to suggest that heterosexuality is simply a social, historical, and/or cultural construct? that there is not something biologically innate—essential—in male/female sexual attraction where it widely exists? If indeed there is not, why should heterosexuality enjoy any special status? How, then, can anyone argue that heterosexuality is "natural"—as do most opponents of gay sexuality—and that it should be therefore the favored and exclusive basis for marriage? Muhlestein's claims for the cultural construction of sexuality notwithstanding, I suspect he would acknowledge, if pressed, that a basic, inborn opposite-sex attraction (with all of its accompanying impulses for pair bonding) exists innately in most of the human population but that its private expression and the conditions under which that expression may be socially permissible will vary considerably based on cultural conditions and attitudes, as history has shown. It is reasonable, then, to conclude that the same is true of homosexuality.

Muhlestein's oversimplified interpretation of the historical record

can be seen in his lengthy reference to the research of Louis Crompton, which documents the widely varying degrees of tolerance and intolerance shown over the centuries toward homosexual behavior. Obviously Muhlestein's intent is to argue that, since cultures such as the ancient Spartans, the classical Chinese aristocracy, and the samurai and monastic cultures of pre-twentieth century Japan had well-established, accepted patterns of man/boy love (in the context of pedagogical training), and since certain homophobic periods of "Christian" culture brutally suppressed overt or suspected homosexuality to the point of its virtual apparent disappearance, these variations demonstrate that relative percentages of homosexuality in the population were not consistent. Thus (Muhlestein concludes), homosexuality could hardly derive from essentialist causes assumed to be consistent.

Two factors that Muhlestein does not acknowledge sufficiently help clarify these matters. First, there is an important distinction between sexual orientation (desires, fantasies, and yearnings which are largely innate and, especially in men, generally prove little subject to alteration of gender direction) and sexual behavior (which is susceptible to environmental influence and personal discipline). A person can be strongly homosexually oriented without necessarily expressing it in overt sexual behavior. Social or religious disapprobation may well motivate such suppression. Conversely, a person may, under certain circumstances, engage in homosexual behaviors without being predominantly homosexual in orientation. Social or religious acceptance of such behavior may encourage this. A corollary is that sexual orientation in general is more complex than simply either/or.

One of the most helpful aspects of the groundbreaking research of Alfred Kinsey and his associates was the development of the H-H scale, a seven-point continuum that recognized varying degrees of bisexuality in addition to straight heterosexual and straight homosexual orientation.¹¹ Thus, when cultures accept homosexual behaviors, such as those in which man/boy love was practiced with approval, it does not indicate a percentage increase in the numbers of strongly oriented homosexuals (5's and 6's on Kinsey's H-H Scale) as much as it demonstrates that many men are capable of relative degrees of bisexual behavior if that is culturally allowed.

Second, we need to recognize—far more than Muhlestein's parenthetical nod—the enormous suppressive effects of marginalization, ostracization, and even more violent forms of persecution and punish-

ment on historical manifestations of homosexual behavior. Same-sex attraction may be present in individuals, but how it is expressed, suppressed, or repressed will vary widely based on cultural attitudes, including social/religious tolerance or intolerance. Although the matter is virtually impossible to investigate, many biologists and psychologists assume that the percentage distribution of pronounced homosexual orientation (Kinsey Scale 5's and 6's) has been relatively consistent over time and across cultures. Their explanation for apparent declines in the manifestations of homosexuality is that, when punished—or otherwise severely sanctioned—homosexuals have tended to closet themselves to survive. Muhlestein claims that “there were very few lesbians in earlier times” (22) compared to the present, but how are we supposed to know that? Because there is little evidence in the written record? Any feminist will patiently explain to him the reasons why there were very few known women philosophers, clerics, poets, painters, scientists, or historians in earlier times—and how those reasons and small numbers might relate to lack of written evidence for the occurrence of lesbian desire.

In short, like his superficial look at early theoretical scientific explanations, Muhlestein's odd foray into Crompton's historical survey does not at all support his conclusion, namely, that “historical evidence for the nonessentialist view of sex in general, and sexual orientation in particular, is convincing” (27–28). Without heavy qualification, this conclusion is not at all convincing.

Muhlestein then considers what he calls subjective evidence, that is, the reporting by homosexuals, particularly males, about their personal perception of their erotic longing and their desire for physical and emotional intimacy. With a high level of consistency, they declare that the orientation of their desire is inherent, that it is not consciously chosen, that it often manifests itself at an early age and becomes clearer as they mature, and that their only real choice is between denying and/or suppressing those feelings or acknowledging and/or expressing them. Their coming to sexual awareness in these ways parallels that of heterosexuals. Muhlestein admits that “the subjective, or anecdotal, evidence for the essentialist approach to [homo]sexual orientation is strong, particularly for men” (16).

Indeed, to discount the weight of such self-perception by homosexuals—primary evidence, as it were—would demonstrate dubious judgment, as Muhlestein admits. But he then asserts that self-“knowledge” can be influenced by culture and environment and is therefore not “conclusively”

reliable. To illustrate his point, he cites an *Atlantic Monthly* story on “apotemnophilia” and “acrotomophilia,” respectively attraction to the condition of being an amputee and feeling sexual attraction toward amputees (28–30). Once these states of mind are named, publicized, and legitimized by experts, they become fashionable and attractive to increasing numbers of individuals. Muhlestein’s author apparently did not report on the numbers of apotemnophiliacs and acrotomophiliacs or provide documentation of the increasing trend over time. Muhlestein tentatively extends this analogy to homosexuality: i.e., the more widely homosexuality is recognized and legitimized, the more (he fears) that heterosexual individuals will find gayness emotionally appealing and declare themselves homosexual as a result.

I am amused by this analogy. I cannot read it as other than grasping at straws. If Muhlestein means seriously to suggest that vast numbers of genuinely, innately, heterosexual men and women would suddenly self-identify as homosexuals if gay marriage were allowed, then he ignores the general tendency of humans to choose the easier, more approved path when it is possible to do so. He must be positing a cascade of unspecified but powerful corollary changes in society. It is difficult to imagine that homosexuality would become a majority position; and if it remains a sharply defined minority, then the possible, almost predictable, social costs include prejudice, scorn, discrimination, rejection, and even violence. Doubtless, Muhlestein will counter that legitimating gay marriage will help to overcome that stigma and eliminate persecution, thereby making personal claims of homosexual identity much easier. Let us hope so, say I. But let us at the same time remain grounded in reality and acknowledge that legalizing gay marriage will not, in itself, overcome centuries of biased misunderstanding and rejection.

II

Born “that way”—or not? At one time, that question seemed the most crucial to me as I tried to sort out the theological implications of homosexuality. If this sexual orientation is substantially biologically imprinted and not a condition freely chosen, then assuming that God would impose a one-size-fits-all heterosexual set of expectations on gays would be patently wrong. And for the heterosexual majority to employ social and religious pressures in an attempt to “correct” this naturally occurring minority and force them into conformity with the mainstream would be unright-

teous dominion. Thus, it seemed to me of paramount importance to prove that biology was somehow the etiologial explanation.

Now, although I still believe that biology has in most instances a pronounced—though perhaps not total—influence on homosexual orientation and that the still incomplete scientific evidence for this position will gradually be more firmly established, I am less concerned about pinpointing the exact cause(s). From my observation over some years of many homosexual persons, I have concluded that whether gay identity is a result of nature, nurture, or some combination doesn't really matter. What matters is that, for the great majority of homosexuals, the orientation of their desire for intimacy and erotic fulfillment is established, real, and strongly resistant to alteration.¹² Shouldn't they then be allowed to follow the life path that seems good to them and that brings them happiness if others are not adversely affected?

And so the crucial question then becomes: How can we, without prejudice but with justice and humane concern, create supportive conditions that give these brothers and sisters of ours their best opportunity to live happy, productive, fulfilled lives in this mortal span?

III

In his extended attempt to justify denying marriage to homosexual persons, Muhlestein ignores or minimizes some of the most powerful practical and moral arguments supporting it. Let's consider practical outcomes.

First, marriage, as experts agree, does promote stability in people's lives: better health, fewer risky behaviors, more satisfying sex lives, larger incomes, greater longevity, and in general greater happiness than single or divorced people (7). Stable lives mean fewer problems that society must deal with. Why, then, is it not in society's interest to make the stabilizing influence of marriage available to a significant minority that, not surprisingly, has suffered for want of it? If gays are statistically more subject to health risks and have higher rates of depression, addiction, and suicide, surely the lack of social acceptance and of equal opportunity for socially approved unions is partly responsible. Leveling the playing field would undoubtedly improve these conditions. Consider, for example, how the introduction of gay marriage has the potential of reducing sexual promiscuity among gays (as marriage reduces promiscuity among heterosexuals) and thereby reducing the spread of AIDS.

Second, with marriage in America declining in appeal and statistical success, it can use help from whatever quarter. Homosexuals constitute a minority that wishes to affirm this institution and its ideals. Contrary to the hue and cry raised by the extreme right, gays are not trying to dismantle marriage but rather to extend its stabilizing influence on society. By entering into it, they are attempting as individuals and as couples to be socially responsible. Religious conservatives should recognize this motivation and embrace proponents of gay marriage as allies. Why is that so hard to grasp?

Third, as Muhlestein observes in his lament for the current state of marriage: "In a majority of cases, the breakup of a traditional marriage is a bad thing, not just for any children involved, but also for the divorcing parties" (7). I agree. So why continue to encourage "mixed" traditional marriages between a gay and a heterosexual partner as our religious culture has done and continues to do implicitly. Such marriages, flawed from the outset, are typically a result of the Church's largely unqualified insistence on the importance of traditional marriage for everyone and its refusal to legitimize alternative sexual orientations and life patterns.

This problem is more widespread among Mormons than we care to acknowledge. These "mixed" marriages seem much more likely to end in divorce or, if they remain intact, are much less likely to provide marital satisfactions to both partners. Indeed, their negative outcomes typically cause pain and suffering for all involved, not least to the children of such unions. Nor is it in society's best interest to perpetuate such suffering. Would it not be fairer and more humane to legitimize a form of marriage that is more realistically attuned to the uniqueness of the individuals involved?

IV

In my mind, the moral reasons for supporting gay marriage loom even larger than the practical ones. There are several interwoven strands to the moral justification argument. I begin with the "self-evident" truths spelled out in our Declaration of Independence: the inalienable human rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Homosexuals driven to suicide deprive themselves of life. Gays and lesbians in the closet or discriminated against in employment, housing, and education lack significant components of liberty. And spending one's entire life dealing with

the social message that one is “wrong” and with the religious message that one is “bad” excludes happiness in decisive ways.

Aside from the specific benefits offered by marriage, access to marriage exemplifies for gays and lesbians the more general goals to which they aspire: respect, legitimacy, and recognition that this very important aspect of their being—the condition that *for whatever reason* is deeply imprinted in their sense of themselves—does not diminish them or make them second class. As a naturally occurring minority, they claim to be entitled equally to whatever rights and opportunities society can extend. In short, they are looking for their justified place at the table. And since they have no intent to disrupt the feast for the rest of us, nor do we have reasonable and realistic grounds to say that they would compromise our gustatory satisfaction, how can we then deny their request without compromising our own ideals of equity and fairness?¹³

If some say that, as they see it, the claim of homosexual orientation is questionable, that homosexual behavior is unacceptable, and that gays must not have the opportunity to marry, then surely their personal discomfort must be trumped by the right of homosexual persons to define themselves freely and to pursue happiness according to their own light, providing they do not impinge on the rights of their critics. This quintessentially American position cannot be denied without assaulting bedrock national values.

Moreover, since marriage is seen as a desirable state, granting homosexual persons access to its benefits is centrally consistent with the ethical teachings of all major religions. At the simplest level, that means being our brother’s and sister’s keeper; it means doing unto others as we would have others do unto us.

To understand why we are morally obliged to grant homosexuals the right to marry, we must look at the larger, central, complex role of sexuality in human lives.¹⁴ Whether or not we like to admit it, we are sexual beings. For most of us, sex is one of the most fascinating, mysterious, and challenging aspects of life. Like the Grand Canyon, it’s awesome, dazzlingly beautiful at times, powerfully inviting, and also potentially dangerous to negotiate. On the one hand, we are like lesser animals in the inescapability of our sexuality; on the other, we sense in it a godlike power. Mythology and folklore from earliest times and disparate cultures perceived this power and framed the creative acts of the gods in sexual metaphors. On some primordial level we know that sexuality is an energy that

underlies and drives creation. It is a basic human need, a basic human privilege. And so a life without sexual fulfillment is not a complete life, however good it otherwise may be.

Like any great force, sexuality—if rightly channeled—can bless our lives, but if uncontrolled it has as much potential for damage as for benefit. And thus, to minimize its destructive potential, codes of sexual morality come into being.

Some assume that sexual moral rules originate at some universal level of abstraction, that they were decreed in the beginning by God, more or less arbitrarily, as a test of obedience—“thou shalt not.” But if we look at historical evidence, we see the stages by which such moral codes have evolved based on human experience. The prohibitions they contain, including those laid down in scripture, are directly related to perceived negative effects of particular behaviors as they affect individuals, interpersonal relationships, and especially the welfare of the larger society. For example, adultery is forbidden in order to secure faithfulness and stability in the marriage relationship and thus reduce the disruptive social and psychological effects of sexual promiscuity. Fornication is forbidden because society needs to discourage relationships in which the participants are immature or otherwise unable to assume responsibility for the complex outcomes of sexual intimacy. Society doesn’t want to deal with the attendant problems. In short, sexual moral codes rest on the very *practical* relationship between acts and outcomes. To be moral, sex must be psychologically and socially responsible.

But sexual morality is not just a matter of “thou shalt not.” “Thou shalt not” is a blunt instrument, a negative, easy, and sometimes heavy-handed marker. If we believe that our sexuality is something more than inherent evil, if we see our sexual nature as a vital part of our humanness and as having the potential to raise us to a higher level of being, and if we would pursue the opportunity for growth inherent in this nature, we must surpass the Pharisaical letter of the law to find the more fulfilling and sublime positive aspects of sexual relationship with another.

God’s complex gift of sexuality, with its accompanying responsibilities, thus provides both opportunity and challenge. If its expression is selfish, if sensual gratification is its sole *raison d’être*, or if it reduces the partner simply to an object, it will likely lead to ennui, diminishment, and disillusionment. These are the results of immoral relationships. On the other hand, sex can be the ultimate expression of vulnerability, trust, and gener-

osity. Ideally, it focuses the desire to be fully present to another. As the primary ritual of interpersonal intimacy, it has the power to integrate the mysterious, soulful facets of human life. Through it, the reductive division of body and spirit can be transcended.¹⁵

It is natural, therefore, that sex should be fundamental in human bonding, a means that can solidify a joint search for fulfillment. Humans normally need acceptance and security, and these qualities are most powerfully fostered in intimate partnership. In a world that continually batters the self, each of us needs to know that another who cares deeply is there for us, to defend, counsel, encourage, and console us, and to share with us the dark as well as the light places on the mortal journey. For this reason, pairing is a normal desire, a normal need.

Heterosexual couples may not experience such companionship perfectly, but who in choosing to marry is not grateful for the chance to grow within this nurturing condition with society's unambiguous ritual blessing and continuing encouragement? How many married couples would falter were it not for that social support?

Why, then, should any of us who are not by inclination celibate, including homosexual persons, be asked to forego unnecessarily the opportunity to realize joy and growth through responsible shared sexuality if we are fortunate enough to find a loving, committed partner?

Can we find in scripture reliable guideposts to assist us as we consider our moral obligations in relation to these matters? While reductionist proof-texting without attention to historical and situational contexts provides no real help, the teachings of Jesus as we have them in the Gospels contain the bedrock on which legitimizing gay marriage can be justified. In what has been preserved, he said nothing about homosexuality directly, but indirectly and holistically, his teachings are filled with highly relevant tenets. Consider the following:

- The Kingdom of God is at least as much about the self-fulfillment of persons as it is about institutions.
- The well-being of every individual is important.
- It is not good to be alone.
- In our efforts to help others, we should accept their uniqueness and care for them in the context of their individual—not generalized—circumstances.

- Love and generosity are the first principles that should govern our relationships with others.

Jesus's pronouncements and his behavior repeatedly underscored these premises. They are central to his gospel and the beginning point of discussions in questions of morality. They challenge us to reach out to others generously, flexibly, and inclusively rather than seeking to justify exclusion. Why and how these Christian principles relate to the question of committed homosexual marriages should be obvious.

Biology, life experience, divine intent—identify the causes as you will—have made some members of the human family seek their deepest intimacy with another in ways that differ from the majority. The gender direction of love's longing is mysterious and not, finally, a matter of conscious volition. And for homosexual persons just as for the rest of us, this longing is more than superficially sexual. It also involves affection, sharing, caring, and personal vulnerability. Whatever its cause or causes, the main outlines of Jesus's teaching suggest that we should encourage these persons to find personal growth responsibly within the parameters of their God-given unique nature. We should not deny them sexual self-realization nor insist that they conform to some other one-size-fits-all pattern of longing. Jesus wasn't about inflexible rules. He believed in keeping priorities straight. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath," he said (Mark 2:27). He would probably say something in the same vein about sexual expression.

Do we care enough about the well-being of our homosexual brothers and sisters to allow them a socially approved, supportive structure of love, acceptance, and security like that enjoyed by married heterosexuals, and the opportunity to grow together with a loved one in sustained, committed intimacy? Jesus did say that we should judge human behaviors by their fruits, that is, by their practical outcomes, not by some ideology (Matt. 7:16). Scripture teaches us by implication that it is not good for a man (or a woman) to be alone (Gen. 2:18). If two people of whatever gender commit to each other that they will love, cherish, and support each other without reservation through life's vicissitudes, will not such commitment likely bear good fruit—and should we not support that? I say yes!

Does it trouble me that my view of this matter directly challenges the present stance of the LDS Church, which opposes gay marriage and forbids as sinful any sexual activity outside of traditional marriage? Yes, it does sadden me to be at variance with the Church, but that does not ab-

solve me of the moral responsibility to analyze such matters as thoughtfully as I can and to share with others what my relevant experience has been. I do not see my questioning of the present Church position as inappropriate, disloyal, or without ample precedent. After all, in the Judeo-Christian tradition and in recent LDS Church history, there are numerous examples of significant doctrinal reinterpretations and course corrections. Major examples include the revised view that God is the God of all human beings, not of Israel alone; the reinterpretation of the gathering of Israel, the institution and subsequently the cessation of the practice of polygamy; and the extension of priesthood ordination to black men. It is even evident that the Church's view of homosexuality has undergone some significant adjustment in recent decades; therefore, it, too, may be susceptible to further revision.¹⁶

Is God inconstant, changing his mind suddenly as he goes along? Or do we change in our perception of his will as we experience evolutionary growth? I subscribe to the second position. Since the Church proclaims the importance of ongoing revelation and since our leaders, however wise, do not claim to be infallible, the Latter-day Saints above all religious groups should accept that internal, as well as external, dialogue can contribute to advancing our understanding of the divine will. Latter-day Saints should not merely concede that God's revelation regarding moral development is unfinished but should optimistically expect it to be continually refined. All of us have a responsibility to help prepare the seedbed of understanding for moral progress.

Gay marriage need not be seen as incompatible with LDS doctrine. The Church opposes sexual activity outside marriage; but by recognizing gay married relationships, it would allow the ennobling expression of natural sexuality in a morally responsible way, within the context of commitment. Gays could then be expected to observe the same standards of fidelity to their spouse that the Church requires of heterosexual persons. Channeling gay sexual expression in this way would discourage the promiscuity that gays as outsiders are, not surprisingly, vulnerable to. Surely that would be a good thing.

But what about the assertions in "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," those that concern "the eternal role of gender" and declare an "ideal" familial structure for parent/child relationship?¹⁷ Neither need those beliefs be an impediment to supporting gay marriage. The Church need not accept gay marriages as "eternal"; it would not need to

offer *temple* gay marriages. They could be regarded like civil marriages—for this life only. As the Church views the matter, adjustments are going to have to be made in an afterlife anyway for many people, because many situations involving marriage, singleness, or parent/child/nurturer relationships are not ideally finalized. For those who do their best to live uprightly given their varying mortal circumstances, the afterlife will doubtless satisfactorily resolve itself.

In the meantime, let us be focused on how we can arrange the conditions of this messy present life so as to bring about the best chance of growth and happiness for all individuals. Moral concern for others, it seems to me, makes such efforts incumbent on us. Let's get serious about removing stones from the paths of our gay brothers and sisters. If God wants to change the orientation of their sexual feelings in an afterlife, that matter is in his hands, but we can make their lives better here and now. Let's acknowledge honestly what is really happening to gays and lesbians as matters now stand. Not a few enter heterosexual marriages because of social/religious pressure, even though they have grave doubts about such a decision and even though the outcomes for all concerned are frequently heartbreaking. Others suffer solitary lives unnecessarily or perhaps are driven by frustration into homosexual promiscuity. Still others find a gay or lesbian partner but are forced to do so without the stabilizing benefit of social and religious support, which imposes added strains on an intimate relationship. In the long run, many of these gay and lesbian persons leave the Church they have loved because they feel marginalized or deprived by its doctrines. Who can blame them? And it's a shame, because it doesn't have to be so.

I have observed some parents who, when their children come to make requests, look for reasons to say "no." A child wants to try something out of the ordinary, something intriguing, something perhaps with a little uncertainty to it. And these parents almost automatically respond by saying, "No! We don't do that. You might get hurt. No!" Instead of looking for ways to make the activity safe or for ways to accommodate it—in short, a way to say "yes"—they work hard at finding reasons for denial. In my experience, those children frequently grow up fearful and timid, or resentful and rebellious. Instead of expanding in confidence and capability, these youths either contract or explode. I have seen the same attitudes in some employers toward their employees and in some leaders toward their followers.

I believe we have an analogous situation in respect to the gay-marriage campaign. Gays and lesbians are looking for responsibility and opportunity; they are looking for fuller self-realization; they are looking for justice. And in response, up step those conservative guardians of the status quo who say “no” automatically, then cast about to justify their negativity. They conjure up bogeymen. They appeal to fear. Instead of opening up possibility, they are in the business of shutting it down. Instead of pursuing the path of inclusivity in the spirit of Christ’s gospel teaching, they employ a strategy of exclusion and rejection. That just does not seem right to me. It does not seem a response consistent with our highest Christian principles or worthy of our better natures.

None of us has all the answers. On interpreting some of these questions, reasonable people can disagree. But if we lack certainty in moving forward on this issue, we should err in the direction of fairness, compassion, and inclusion. Those are the ideals that matter most. Without compromising those ideals, we should and we can find a way to say to our gay brothers and lesbian sisters, “Yes!”

Notes

1. With ninety-eight endnotes, Muhlestein certainly has not erred on the side of under-documentation. But I learned long ago that no reliable direct correlation exists between the quantity of documentation and the quality of its application. Ultimately, an argument must stand solidly on its own legs.

2. The biblical passages cited by Muhlestein include no mention of the accepted practice of polygamy among Old Testament peoples, or for that matter, any mention of Mormonism’s polygamist doctrine and history.

3. For a useful discussion of the historical evolution of marriage as a social institution, see Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History: From Obedience to Intimacy, or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking, 2005). Through much of its history, marriage was primarily about family alliances, the consolidation and preservation of wealth and power, and/or the practical division of labor for family survival. If love entered into it, that was a bonus. Accordingly, sexual fidelity—particularly for males—was often ignored.

4. In July 2006 the American Academy of Pediatrics issued the following statement: “There is ample evidence to show that children raised by same-gender parents fare as well as those raised by heterosexual parents. More than twenty-five years of research have documented that there is no relationship between parents’ sexual orientation and any measure of a child’s emotional, psychosocial, and behavioral adjustment. These data have demon-

strated no risk to children as a result of growing up in a family with one or more gay parents. Conscientious and nurturing adults, whether they are men or women, heterosexual or homosexual, can be excellent parents. The rights, benefits, and protections of civil marriage can further strengthen these families." Quoted in Evan Wolfson, "The Freedom to Marry: Keep Dancing," July 12, 2006, http://www.advocate.com/print_article_ektic133556.asp (accessed July 25, 2006). In the previous month, the Arkansas Supreme Court unanimously rejected arguments to deny marriage to gays. It received briefs from, among others, the American Psychological Association, the National Association of Social Workers, the American Psychiatric Association, the Association to Benefit Children, and the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers calling for an end to marriage discrimination in the interest of children and families. *Ibid.*

Muhlestein cites a study stating that children in single-parent households do not do as well as those from traditional two-parent households (note 17). This is true regardless of the gender or sexual orientation of the parents. Two are better than one. And it constitutes yet another argument in favor of allowing gay marriages to give children of a gay parent the benefit of an additional nurturing adult in their home.

Doubtless, the biggest challenge to children reared in gay or lesbian households is the irrational prejudice against their families that they must sometimes contend with. Is the existence of that prejudice a sufficient rationalization for banning gay marriage? Shall we punish the victims rather than eradicate the cause of the injustice?

5. Chief Judge Judith Kaye wrote a powerful and persuasive dissent from the New York Supreme Court's 4–2 refusal to strike down the exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage: "The defendants primarily assert an interest in encouraging procreation within marriage. But while encouraging opposite-sex couples to marry before they have children is certainly a legitimate interest of the State, the exclusion of gay men and lesbians from marriage in no way furthers this interest. There are enough marriage licenses to go around for everyone. . . . [After all,] no one rationally decides to have children because gays and lesbians are excluded from marriage." Wolfson, "The Freedom to Marry."

6. Whose obligation is it, after all, to maintain the birthrate? Cannot heterosexual couples have more children if necessary for the common good? But given the steady expansion of our national population, is this *really* a problem?

7. The phrase "homosexual lifestyle" paints imprecisely with a very

broad brush. Just as with heterosexuals, there are numerous homosexual lifestyles. But if Muhlestein is alluding to “illicit” sexual behavior as central to this “lifestyle,” he should consider that legalizing gay marriage would discourage sexual promiscuity for those who choose to marry (just as it does for heterosexuals), would foster stability and sexual responsibility, and would make their sexual activity “licit.”

8. Muhlestein makes a stab at explaining—in ways that support his thesis—several unresolved questions in the gene research. These complex questions cannot be adequately treated in so short an article. I think that both he and I are out of our depth in attempting to analyze such technical matters and should yield to expert interpreters.

9. Simon Levay, “The Biology of Sexual Orientation.” AOL Hometown, 2003, updated February 2006, <http://members.aol.com/slevay/page22.html> (accessed July 2006).

10. For the results of a study of gender-atypical behavior distribution among homosexual and heterosexual persons, see Alan Bell and Martin Weinberg, *Homosexualities: A Study of Diversity among Men and Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978).

11. The Kinsey H-H Scale placed total heterosexuality (0) at one pole and total homosexuality (6) at the other. Between the extreme points occur varying degrees of bisexuality. In the middle (at 3) Kinsey located evenly bisexual persons. Individuals assigned scale numbers of 1 and 2 would be dominantly heterosexual, with some degree of homosexual attraction; those assigned 4 and 5 would be relatively more homosexual but with some manifestations of heterosexual attraction. Kinsey based scale number assignments on extensive questioning of sample subjects concerning psychic indications (feelings, fantasies, dreams) and actual sexual experiences. See Alfred Kinsey, Wardell Pomeroy, and Clyde Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1948) for statistical distribution along the H-H scale of the numerically large sample in Kinsey’s study.

12. Those who claim that reparative therapies successfully eliminate dominant homosexual desires and enable satisfactory heterosexual functioning do not as a rule conduct careful follow-up studies to confirm that the apparent change of sexual orientation is permanent. I wonder why? Nor do they explore the degree to which a compelling need for religious/social conformity may cause such “changed” persons to persuade themselves against their true feelings. Not least, the proponents of such change therapies rarely differentiate carefully between strongly oriented homosexuals (5–6 on the H-H Kinsey Scale) and bisexuals (2, 3, 4 H-H measurement). The latter may well be able to

function heterosexually if so motivated, but to claim for these individuals a change of underlying orientation as a result of therapy is misleading.

13. Some suggest that homosexuals could be allowed to enter into formalized “civil unions” or “domestic partnerships” while the word “marriage” retains its established meaning and restrictions. Several years ago I thought that would be a practical compromise, but I have changed my mind. I now agree with the editors of the conservative *New Republic*, who in 2000—following a Vermont Supreme Court ruling in favor of supporters of gay unions (*Baker v. State*)—wrote this: “Post Vermont, we have entered a different world. But it contains pitfalls as well as opportunities. One danger is that supporters of equal marriage rights will accept a semantic compromise that would grant homosexuals every benefit and responsibility of civil marriage but deny them the word. The Vermont legislature is under pressure to construct an elaborate parallel institution, a kind of super-domestic partnership, that would be identical in all legal respects to marriage but not invoke the m-word. There is an old phrase for this kind of arrangement: separate but equal. To grant homosexuals all the substance of marriage while denying them the institution is, in some ways, a purer form of bigotry than denying them any rights at all. It is to devise a pseudo-institution to both erase inequality and at the same time perpetuate it. What if Virginia had struck down interracial-marriage bans [*Loving v. Virginia*, 1967] only to erect a new distinction between same-race marriages and mixed-race ‘domestic partnerships’?”

“There is in fact no argument for a domestic-partnership compromise except that the maintenance of stigma is an important social value—that if homosexuals are finally allowed on the marriage bus, they should still be required to sit in the back. This ‘solution’ smacks of the equally incoherent half-measure of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell,’ another unwieldy contraption that was designed to overcome discrimination but instead has ruthlessly reinforced it. Equality is equality. Marriage is marriage. There is no ultimate moral or political answer to this question but to grant both. And to keep marshaling the moral, religious, civic, and human reasons why it is an eminently important and noble thing to do.” Editors, “Separate but Equal?” *New Republic*, January 10, 2000, 9.

14. Some of what follows here is adapted from my essay, “Sexual Morality Revisited,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 37, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 114–36.

15. Thomas More’s *The Soul of Sex* (New York: Harper Collins, 1998) is an extended discussion of this rich potentiality.

16. Until recently, the Church has declared (1) that homosexual feel-

ings are self-chosen, the result of yielding to Satan's temptations, (2) that through prayer, righteous living, and the atonement of Christ such feelings can be made to go away (the Church unambiguously supported various reparation therapies); (3) that those with homosexual feelings should enter into heterosexual traditional marriage as a means of reparation; (4) that for one to declare openly his identity as homosexual (even without homosexual behavior) was grounds for compromised status in the Church and possible disciplinary action. Now, General Authorities are moving by degrees away from all of these earlier positions. Speaking for the Church, designated General Authorities acknowledge (1) that the causes of homosexuality are not known but are deep-seated and may be impossible to change; (2) that homosexual thoughts are not necessarily the result of unrighteous living, and that prayer, righteous living, and the atonement of Christ will not necessarily make such homoerotic attractions go away; (3) that heterosexual marriage should not be regarded as a cure for homosexual feelings; and (4) that if those with homosexual feelings do not engage in homosexual behaviors, they can participate fully in the Church and—in President Hinckley's words—"go forward like any other member." Gordon B. Hinckley, "What Are People Asking about Us?" *Ensign*, November 1998, 71; Elders Dallin H. Oaks and Lance B. Wickman, interviewed by LDS Public Relations, "Same Gender Attraction," August 2006, <http://www.lds.org/newsroom/issues/answer/0,19491,60561-202-4-202,00.html> (accessed February 2007); Dallin H. Oaks, "Same-Gender Attraction," *Ensign*, October 1995, 7–14. These gradual changes are significant, and they underscore the fact that further evolution of the Church's position, even further revelation, in these matters is entirely possible.

17. First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, November 1995, 102; also <http://lds.org/portal/site/LDSOrg/menuitem>.

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The Encounter of the Young Joseph Smith with Presbyterianism

John Matzko

Of the Protestant denominations vying for converts in western New York during the early nineteenth century, Methodism is rightly regarded as having made the greatest religious impress on the young Joseph Smith. Oliver Cowdery claimed that Smith had been “awakened” during a sermon by the Methodist minister George Lane. Smith himself said that his “mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect” and that he even “felt some desire to be united with them.”¹ At some point between 1821 and 1829, Smith served as “a very passable exhorter” at Methodist camp meetings “away down in the woods, on the Vienna Road.”² His wife, Emma Hale, was a Methodist, and shortly after her first pregnancy ended in a stillbirth (and Martin Harris lost Smith’s earliest dictations), Smith briefly joined a Methodist class meeting that convened at the home of Emma’s uncle, the Reverend Nathaniel Lewis.³ Two years later, when Smith organized his new church, both its conferences of elders and its commissioning of minimally trained missionaries had a Methodist flavor.⁴

Nevertheless, if Methodism served as the most significant Protestant influence on the young Joseph Smith, Presbyterianism and its characteristic Calvinist theology played an important, if more negative, role in his religious development. When Joseph reported his earliest vision to his mother, he did not tell her that all Christian sects were equally erroneous. He said that “Presbyterianism [was] not true.”⁵

In early nineteenth-century America, Presbyterians differed from most other Protestant denominations in that—at least in theory—they held to an elaborately refined theological system that stretched back to the Ref-

ormation. Like other branches of the Calvinist or "Reformed" tradition, Presbyterianism emphasized the sovereignty of God in the salvation of souls rather than the agency of man. Presbyterians insisted on the total inability of man to contribute to his own salvation, God's predestination of the elect to everlasting life, the limitation of Christ's atonement only to those who would be saved, the irresistible nature of God's call to the elect, and the impossibility that any soul sanctified by God's Spirit could fall from the state of grace. In other words, Calvinists insisted that salvation sprang from the immutable decree of God's election rather than from an individual's ability to achieve salvation through his or her own efforts.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Calvinism was in decline, especially beyond the older coastal settlements where religion of every sort seemed to wane. Pioneers traveled faster than preachers, and easterners feared that the frontier might degenerate into a haunt of lawlessness as well as religious indifference. Then a wave of revivals convulsed the Trans-Appalachian west, beginning with a spectacular outpouring of religious emotion at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, in 1801.⁶

During this period of revival fervor, Presbyterian insistence on an educated ministry put that denomination at a disadvantage compared with Methodists, Baptists, and Disciples, whose more numerous and less educated clergy preached with primitive zeal to less sophisticated audiences. These less staid denominations outstripped Presbyterians in the competition for western converts; and because of the nature of their plea to the unconverted, even committed Calvinists were virtually forced to accommodate to an informal "Arminianism"—roughly, the belief that human free will *does* play some role in salvation. Some "New School" Presbyterians (most notably, Charles Finney) eventually abandoned Calvinism entirely; and in 1838, American Presbyterians rancorously divided into "Old School" and "New School" factions.⁷

Still, it would be unwise to underestimate the continuing influence of Presbyterianism during the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1854, the German Reformed Church historian Philip Schaff argued that Presbyterians were "without question one of the most numerous, respectable, worthy, intelligent, and influential denominations," and one that had a "particularly strong hold on the solid middle class."⁸ By the Plan of Union of 1801, Presbyterians and Congregationalists united their efforts to evangelize the West, and this joint effort worked largely to the benefit of the Presbyterians. Congregationalists, even in Connecticut, began call-

ing themselves “Presbyterians,” and the upshot was that membership in the Presbyterian Church continued to grow, not only through conversions but also through the addition of many New Englanders.⁹

The Joseph Smith family, like many others from New England, emigrated to western New York in the early nineteenth century bringing their sometimes-conflicted religious traditions with them. Lucy Mack Smith had been reared by a devout Congregationalist mother through a childhood that can truly be described as “a series of losses.” Thus, not surprisingly, when Lucy reached Palmyra, she developed a connection with the Presbyterian church, even though she held aloof from membership.¹⁰

Presbyterians first established a church in the Palmyra area in 1797, but it was not until after a religious revival gripped the area in 1816 that the Western Presbyterian Church was organized. Although the land for this first meetinghouse in the village—the only church building that existed in Palmyra during Joseph Smith’s childhood—was donated for a union church, the building was constructed almost entirely by Presbyterians. The white, rectangular structure, built in the New England tradition, featured green blinds and a steeple with a gilded weather vane, although there was no bell. In the interior, a gallery reached by stairways on either side faced “a high pulpit . . . of primitive fashion.”¹¹

Sunday sermons, delivered both morning and afternoon, were long and doctrinal. Pews were rented, and Church discipline was rigorously enforced. Members were excommunicated not only for “intemperate use of spirituous liquors,” “having intercourse with females of bad character,” and reneging on bad debts, but also for having “denied the Bible” by declaring that “all men would be saved.” Furthermore, the elders and deacons who enforced this Church order were sturdy representatives of the local political and economic elite.¹² How often Joseph Smith attended Palmyra’s Western Presbyterian Church is unknown; but late in life, a childhood acquaintance, Lorenzo Saunders, recalled that the first time he ever attended Sabbath School he went with “young Joe Smith at the old Presbyterian Church.”¹³

A souring in the relationship between Joseph Smith and the Presbyterians seems to have occurred after the sudden and still mysterious death of his eldest brother, Alvin, on November 19, 1823. In old age, Joseph’s younger brother, William, claimed that, at Alvin’s funeral, the Rev. Benjamin B. Stockton, a Presbyterian minister, had “intimated very strongly” that Alvin had gone to hell.¹⁴

It is often assumed that Stockton's remarks offended the Smith family and drove them from conventional religion. More likely, Stockton simply made a religious appeal, unexceptional for the period. The subsequent Palmyra revival of 1824–25 followed hard on Alvin's death, and Benjamin Stockton served as a leader in that religious resurgence before becoming pastor of Western Presbyterian Church. Lucy Smith later reflected that "the whole neighborhood was very much aroused" and that the Smith family "flocked to the meeting house to see if there was a word of comfort for us." Rather than being repelled by Stockton's preaching, sometime before 1828 Lucy and three of her children—Hyrum, Samuel, and Sophronia—joined the Presbyterian church where Stockton was the pastor.¹⁵

Doubtless, the fact that the Presbyterians were the most prestigious denomination in the neighborhood and the only ones with a meeting-house was no deterrent to this decision, but it is unlikely that the religious-minded Lucy Mack Smith would have made such a momentous decision primarily for reasons of social class. More than twenty years earlier when the Smiths had lived in Randolph, Vermont, Lucy had sought spiritual comfort from a noted Presbyterian minister there, but characterized his message as "emptiness, vanity, vexation of spirit" that "palled upon my heart like the chill night air. . . . It did not fill the aching void within nor satisfy the craving hunger of the soul."¹⁶

Although Joseph later wrote that his "Father's family was proselyted to the Presbyterian faith,"—rather than emphasizing his *mother's* membership—the death of Alvin and the arrival of Stockton seem to have driven both Smith and his father (who glided easily between religious skepticism and folk mysticism) farther from the Presbyterian church and its Calvinistic doctrine.¹⁷ It was probably during this period that Joseph "became partial to the Methodist sect," whose opposition to Reformed doctrine was notorious. Later Smith wrote that the "Presbyterians were most decided against the Baptists and Methodists, and used all their powers of either reason or sophistry to prove their errors, or at least to make the people think they were in error. On the other hand the Baptists and Methodists in their turn were equally Zealous in endeavoring to establish their own tenets and disprove all others."¹⁸

A possible implication of this phrasing is that to Joseph, Presbyterians stood on one side of a theological divide, Baptists and Methodists on the other.¹⁹ After all, Presbyterians gloried in the Protestant Reformation, whereas Francis Asbury, the effective founder of American Meth-

odism, argued that the apostolic order had been lost during the first century and was only then about to be restored.²⁰

According to Lucy Smith, Joseph warned her that, although it would do the family “no injury” to join the Presbyterians, he believed her unaware of “the wickedness of their hearts.” As proof, he predicted that “Deacon Jessup” of the Presbyterian Church would “not scruple to take the last cow” from a widow with eight little children in order to satisfy a debt; and so, she said, it turned out.²¹

Joseph Smith began dictating the Book of Mormon at about the same time that Benjamin Stockton left the pastorate of Western Presbyterian Church. Concurrently, Lucy and her children became inactive members. On March 10, 1830, after eighteen months of procedural delay, the communicants of the Smith family were formally disfellowshipped after a visit from three Church officials. Lucy later claimed that the three Presbyterians had conspired to destroy the Book of Mormon, although Church records note only that the Smiths “did not wish to unite with us any more.”²²

The Presbyterians more than had their revenge. In 1833, when D. P. Hurlbut busied himself collecting anti-Smith affidavits from Palmyra residents, at least ten Presbyterians, all members of the local elite—including Henry Jessup—swore that “Joseph Smith, Senior, and his son Joseph in particular,” were “entirely destitute of moral character, and addicted to vicious habits.”²³

Once the nature of Smith’s “golden Bible” became known, Joseph’s uncle, Jesse Smith, a staunch Calvinist with whom Joseph had lived for some months as a child, assailed the book as “a work of deception.” Joseph had made “use of the holy name of Jehovah!” Jesse remonstrated.²⁴ The *Rochester Observer*, a Presbyterian newspaper, introduced the Book of Mormon below the title “*Blasphemy!*” And the *New York Evangelist* of New York City, another Presbyterian periodical, scorned the new scripture as a plagiarism of the Bible and its followers as persons carried away by a “strange delusion.”²⁵

In 1830, when Smith tried to organize his new converts in Colesville Township, southern New York, he came to believe—with some reason—that Presbyterians had engaged in a conspiracy against him. On the day before a June baptismal service, Rev. John Sherer, a local Presbyterian pastor, attempted what the twenty-first century might call a “cult rescue.” One of his parishioners, Emily Coburn, the sister-in-law of Mormon stal-

wart Newel Knight, had expressed interest in becoming a Mormon. Through a ruse, Sherer met Coburn in a nearby grove and not only expostulated with her but, taking her firmly by the hand, tried to lead her away. A knot of Mormons materialized, and Sherer was forced to retreat. Nevertheless, the next day Coburn was returned to her family through a power of attorney signed by her father. Emily Coburn soon made her peace with the Presbyterian Church that had disciplined her, but later that year she rejoined the Knights and was baptized a Mormon.²⁶

Joseph Smith's troubles in Colesville had only begun. Presbyterians Abram W. Benton, Nathan Boynton, and Cyrus McMaster had Joseph arrested as a "disorderly person" and, when he was acquitted the following day, had him rearrested. After being acquitted a second time, he was forced to flee when local residents threatened mob violence.²⁷ No wonder Smith later avowed in Nauvoo that he had been "ground" in "a Presbyterian smut machine."²⁸

Given Smith's early chafing against Presbyterianism, one might have expected more explicit antagonism toward its distinctive doctrines in the Book of Mormon. Certainly the Book of Mormon seems to contradict all five points of Calvinism (often abbreviated with the acronym TULIP): Total depravity (an inherited sin nature),²⁹ Unconditional election (God's choice and not the human being's),³⁰ Limited atonement (only some are saved),³¹ Irresistible grace (humankind cannot resist the call of God),³² and the Perseverance of the saints (salvation cannot be lost).³³ Nevertheless, it has also been argued that the Book of Mormon incorporates Calvinist doctrine as well.³⁴ For instance, Fawn Brodie—who was literarily gifted but religiously tone-deaf—claimed that in the Book of Mormon "Calvinism and Arminianism had equal status."³⁵

Only one chapter of the Book of Mormon makes what seems to be a specific attack on Presbyterians and their upper-middle-class leaders. In Alma 31 (the only chapter in the Book of Mormon in which the Calvinist term "elected" is used³⁶), the prophet Alma heads a mission to the heretical Zoramites, who have "a place built up in the center of their synagogue, a place for standing . . . high above the head" that "would only admit one person." This description suggests the elevated pulpit at Western Presbyterian Church, which represents the ascendancy of the preacher, his prayers, and his sermons.³⁷ These Zoramites give repeated thanks to God that they are a "chosen and a holy people" and not like all others who are "elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell." Furthermore, the Zoramites

are “a wicked and a perverse people” whose “hearts were set upon gold, and upon silver, and upon all manner of fine goods” (Alma 31:13, 17, 18, 24)—like the hypocritical Deacon Jessup of Western Presbyterian Church.³⁸

Nevertheless, with deference to the importance of Church architecture and social class, such superficialities are of lesser importance to Joseph Smith’s religious development than what he may have heard preached at Western Presbyterian Church between the family’s arrival in 1816–17 and the death of Alvin Smith in 1823.³⁹ Unfortunately, two of the three clergymen who served the Church during that period are now little more than names. Like countless other country parsons of past generations, their shadowy memories survive only through Church lists and genealogies.⁴⁰

Only the Reverend Jesse Townsend (1766–1838), pastor of Western Presbyterian Church from August 1817 to 1820 (or 1821), has left suggestions about the sort of Presbyterianism that might have intersected with the imagination of the adolescent Joseph Smith. Townsend was born in Andover, Connecticut, ten years before the American Revolution and graduated from Yale College in 1790 at the mature age of twenty-five. He married the widow of another clergyman, a woman eleven years his senior, with whom he had four children, all of whom survived their parents. Townsend was first settled as pastor of the Congregational Church in Shelburne, Massachusetts (1792), and then was called to the Congregational Church in Durham, New York (1798). He preached for some years in Madison, New York, and took charge of a Utica academy for a year. After leaving Palmyra, Townsend served with the American Home Missionary Society in Illinois and Missouri, becoming perhaps the first Presbyterian clergyman resident in those states—and curiously anticipating the later moves of Joseph Smith. Returning to Palmyra in 1826, Townsend preached in the neighboring town of Sodus and supplied vacant pulpits in the area while preparing young men for college.⁴¹

Virtually nothing remains of Townsend’s considerable literary efforts beyond a one-volume abridgment of a five-volume Church history, two published letters about New York revivals (1802–3), two published letters about the “Mormonites,” four unpublished private letters, and a dedication sermon preached at the Western Presbyterian Church in 1819.⁴² Intriguingly, even though he died two months after the denominational

split of 1838, the man revealed in these documents does not fit the stereotype of either an Old School or a New School Presbyterian.

Townsend was a staunch Calvinist, yet fervently evangelistic. In the preface to his Church history abridgment, Townsend emphasizes that Church history demonstrates the “progress of truth and its salutary influence on a world ruined by sin,” certainly not the restorationist conviction that gospel truth had been hidden since the first century.⁴³ Yet Townsend gladly worked under the auspices of the interdenominational American Home Missionary Society, which thoroughly offended Old School notions of denominational propriety.

In his report of a revival in the Catskills that occurred in a frontier community without “one framed building in the whole settlement,” Townsend claimed to have spoken with nearly every resident “about the state of their souls,” eventually sparking a revival that led to the organization of a new church. Yet he also rejoiced that this backwoods congregation was “well united in Calvinistic sentiments,” ascribing the change in their condition to “the sovereign grace of God.” In the more settled parish of Durham, New York, Townsend registered “great rejoicing with Zion’s friends” over converts young and old who had come to the Savior. But he also gave thanks that “God has most mercifully preserved us from all appearances of enthusiasm. Though the word has been like the hammer and the fire to break in pieces the rock, yet the work has not been with noise and tumult.”⁴⁴

It is therefore all the more striking to read Townsend’s account of a dream that he had during a religious awakening in Homer, New York. In a letter to a fellow pastor, Townsend elliptically notes his successful mediation of disharmony that had threatened “the interests of that church & the welfare of Zion at large.” He recalled that, while his mind was troubled, he fell asleep and dreamed that he saw the church members “dressed in deep mourning.” After the presiding clergyman publicly confessed his sins to God and the congregation, the Church members did likewise “in the most solemn & impressive manner,” after which the “whole assembly burst into a flood of tears.” Although portions of this letter have been lost, the implication is that the events in the dream were replicated in the actual congregation. And yet it is unlikely that Townsend ever described this dream to his Palmyra congregation because he closes his account to his friend with the words, “I write this dream, brother, inter nos [between us].”⁴⁵ Townsend’s obituary writer seems to have hit the mark when he de-

scribed the clergyman as belonging to “the *old school* of New England divines” yet favoring whatever “measures of the day, whether *new* or *old*, as were instrumental in the salvation of souls.”⁴⁶

The sermon that Townsend preached at the dedication of the first Western Presbyterian Church in Palmyra is, on its surface, neither Calvinistic nor evangelistic in emphasis, although both themes are present on a deeper level. Rather Townsend’s sermon is a discourse in the grand style, appropriate for the most formal sort of ceremony at that time and place. Townsend understood what was expected of him and provided it. The *Palmyra Register* described the dedication as “solemn and interesting to every rational and sober mind,” with Townsend’s message and prayer being followed by the singing of an “elegant” dedicatory ode written for the occasion.⁴⁷

Townsend took as his text Luke 2:14, the message of the Christmas angels. He noted that Christ’s incarnation was “preparatory for the enlargement of his church” and further argued that buildings erected for the worship of God allowed men to “unite in the angelic song” sung at Christ’s birth. Townsend then launched into a long dedicatory prayer (during which the congregation remained standing) that concluded with a plea for his listeners to “truly become as individuals, a habitation of God, through the Spirit. See to it that you do this and you will be able to with the most animated delight to unite in the angelic song. ‘Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.’ May you all do this and with one accord devoutly subjoin your sincere and cordial Amen.”⁴⁸

If Joseph Smith was present that day, one month shy of his fourteenth birthday, this sermon had much to engage his imagination, tuned as it was to sonorous religious language. And he might well have attended, because the dedication of the Presbyterian Church was as much community event as religious service. If so, it would have been the only dedication of a religious structure that Joseph witnessed before the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in 1836.⁴⁹

It is easy enough to spin webs of speculation. There are a limited number of ways in which religious buildings can be dedicated. The traditional Protestant orthodoxy of Townsend’s sermon is self-evident, as are the unconventional aspects of Joseph Smith’s Kirtland prayer. An imprecatory quality at Kirtland stands in contrast to a plea for brotherly unity in Palmyra.

Still, one cannot help but note some at least superficial similarities between Palmyra and Kirtland. For instance, the text of the Palmyra sermon refers to an angelic visitation. The preacher calls the church a “temple,” asks God to fill the house with his glory, and requests that the ceremony be “a Pentecost to our souls.” Townsend refers to the church as “Zion” (as well as “the Israel of God”) and asks congregation members to “feel their hearts burn within them.”⁵⁰ At Kirtland, Joseph Smith concluded his prayer with two sentences that might nearly have been exchanged with those of Townsend’s at Palmyra:

And help us by the power of thy Spirit, that we may mingle our voices with those bright, shining seraphs around thy throne, with acclamations of praise, singing Hosanna to God and the Lamb!

And let these, thine anointed ones, be clothed with salvation, and thy saints shout aloud for joy. Amen, and Amen. (D&C 109:79–80)

Like the Palmyra dedication sermon, the Kirtland prayer was followed by a specially commissioned hymn.⁵¹ All coincidence perhaps. Nevertheless, it is comfortable to imagine that in 1819, a thirteen-year-old with rare aural gifts was deeply impressed by the most stylish ceremony western New York could have offered him, the dedication of a Presbyterian church.

Yet the most influential element of Presbyterianism for Joseph Smith’s religious development was neither the early hostility of its members nor Smith’s possible later reflection of its formal sermonizing. Calvinism’s most important contribution to the Restoration was as a fully developed theological system against which Smith could react. To such a creative intellect, Methodism could serve only as a temporizing way station, not even intermediate to the emphasis Smith began to place on the exaltation of humankind.

Calvinists worshipped a God who received the powerless inheritors of Adam’s sin through His grace alone. Joseph Smith gloried rather in agency, the ability of an individual to choose good or evil untrammelled by any predestinating power. Unlike the Presbyterians who emphasized God’s sovereignty, Smith declared that God had cast down Satan precisely because he had “sought to destroy the agency of man.” The Messiah had redeemed humanity from the fall so that men could “become free forever, knowing good from evil,” free “to act for themselves and not to be acted upon” (Moses 4:3; 2 Ne. 2:26).⁵² Without his exposure to Presbyterianism in half-settled but “burned-over” western New

York, it is doubtful that Joseph Smith could have so expeditiously conceived such a sophisticated counter-system. Calvinism, rather than Methodism, provided an elaborate theological structure that Smith found worthy of his mettle. To him, it was indeed Presbyterianism that was most importantly “not true.”

Notes

1. Oliver Cowdery, “Letter III” to W. W. Phelps, December 1834, *LDS Messenger and Advocate* 1 (December 1834): 42, in Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996–2003), 2:424; Joseph Smith, “Manuscript History,” 2, *ibid.*, 1:59.

2. Orsamus Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham’s Purchase, and Morris’ Reserve* (Rochester, N.Y.: William Alling, 1851), 214, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 3:50. Since the Methodists did not acquire property on the Vienna Road until July 1821, the camp meetings were almost certainly held after that date. Wesley Walters, “A Reply to Dr. Bushman,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1969): 99. D. Michael Quinn argues that, on the contrary, a Methodist camp meeting of 1820 can be fairly interpreted as the religious revival to which Joseph Smith refers and that Methodists typically only asked permission to use property for camp meetings rather than purchase the land. D. Michael Quinn, “Joseph Smith’s Experience of a Methodist ‘Camp Meeting’ in 1820,” *Dialogue Paperless*, E-Paper #3, expanded version (“definitive”), December 20, 2006, <http://www.dialoguejournal.com/excerpts/e4.pdf> (accessed March 6, 2007).

3. Joseph and Hiel Lewis, “Mormon History: A New Chapter about to Be Published,” *Amboy [Illinois] Journal*, April 30, 1879, 1, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:305–6.

4. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989); Richard Lyman Bushman with the assistance of Jed Woodworth, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 153, 251–52, 254.

5. “Joseph Smith History, 1839,” in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:143.

6. George M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1970), 9; Paul K. Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America’s Pentecost* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

7. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1972), 432–39, 444–45, 461; Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind*, 59–87.

8. Philip Schaff, *America: A Sketch of Its Political, Social, and Religious Character*, 1855; rpt., editor Perry Miller (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), 118.

9. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind*, 10–11.

10. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 11–13. Solomon Mack, Lucy's father, was a Universalist during her childhood but converted to orthodox Christianity in 1810.

11. "Miscellaneous Church Files of Palmyra," microfilm, 900 no. 61, Microforms Room, Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; Woman's Society of the Western Presbyterian Church, comp., *Palmyra*, Wayne County, New York (Rochester, N.Y.: Herald Press, 1907), microfilm, 900 no. 241, Microforms Room, Lee Library. This church building also served Palmyra as a town hall.

12. *One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years of the Western Presbyterian Church* (Palmyra, N.Y.: N.pub., 1942), n.p., in "Miscellaneous Church Files on Palmyra"; *Wayne Sentinel*, January 28, 1824, 4; "Records of the Session of the Presbyterian Church in Palmyra," microfilm, 900 no. 61, Microform Room, Lee Library; Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), 77.

13. Lorenzo Saunders, Interviewed by William H. Kelley, September 17, 1884, 1–18, E. L. Kelley Papers, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:127.

14. Dan Vogel, "Introduction to Palmyra and Manchester, New York, Documents," *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:5; William Smith, Interviewed by E. C. Briggs, 1893, *Deseret News*, January 20, 1894, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:512–13.

15. Lucy Mack Smith, "Preliminary Manuscript" (1845), LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:306. For notice of the 1824–25 revival, see *Wayne Sentinel*, March 2, 1825. No membership records of the Western Presbyterian Church survive for this period, and the date of their membership remains controversial, but Lucy Smith strongly implied that she joined the Presbyterian Church after Alvin's death. Stockton served as pastor of Western Presbyterian Church from February 1824 until October 1827, the mostly likely period of the Smiths' church membership.

16. Lucy Mack Smith, "Preliminary Manuscript," in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:241–42.

17. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989–92) 1:270. Smith said that he attended meetings of vari-

ous denominations—including presumably Presbyterian—“as often as occasion would permit.”

18. *Ibid.*, 1:271.

19. It is also perhaps noteworthy that Smith accused the Presbyterians of using “all their powers of either reason or sophistry” to prove the errors of the Baptists and Methodists, but then he used only the word “Zealous” to describe the arguments of the latter. *Ibid.*

20. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 167.0

21. A Lucy Smith History, 1845,” *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:308. Henry Jessup was actually an elder rather than a deacon. A good candidate for this orphaned family is that of Enoch Saunders, who died October 10, 1825, and who had seven children at the 1820 census. Lorenzo Saunders, who recalled attending the Presbyterian Sunday school with Joseph, also remembered the Smiths as Akind neighbors in sickness.” Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet*, 61; Saunders, Interview, 1884, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:156. The date of Enoch Saunders’s death lends further weight to a later date for Smith family membership in Western Presbyterian Church.

22. “Records of the Session of the Presbyterian Church in Palmyra,” 11; records relating to the Smith family have been transcribed in *Early Mormon Documents*, 3:496–501. By this date, daughter Sophronia had married and had probably transferred her church membership, so she was not included in the notice of church discipline.

23. Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painsville, Ohio: E. D. Howe, 1834), 261–62, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:48–55. As Vogel notes, the “vicious habits” referred to likely included drinking (49 note 2). Later, Alexander McIntyre (1792–1859), another pew-holder at Western Presbyterian Church, asserted that Joseph Smith Sr. was a drunkard, a liar, and a thief, and “his house a perfect brothel.” *Early Mormon Documents*, 3:172.

24. Jesse Smith, Letter to Hyrum Smith, June 17, 1829, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:551–52; see also 1:633; Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 114.

25. W. W. Phelps, Letter to Oliver Cowdery, February 21, 1835, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 3:32; *New York Evangelist* (1832) quoted in *Early Mormon Documents*, 3:297–98.

26. Emily M. Austin, *Mormonism: or, Life among the Mormons* (Madison, Wisc.: M. J. Cantwell, 1882), 30–52, 56–58, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:174–76; see also “Newel Knight Journal,” in *Scraps of Biography: Tenth Book of the Faith-Promoting Series* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1883), 46–69, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:45–65. According to Knight, Sherer

himself returned with the power of attorney. During the Nauvoo period, Emily Coburn Austin became disillusioned with Mormonism and left the Church.

27. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 116–18. Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:94, notes that in “Smith’s zeal to place blame for his early persecutions on the Presbyterians,” he may have mistaken the religious affiliation of Abram Benton because Benton seems to have been a Universalist.

28. Joseph Smith, Journal, February 21, 1843, 210–11 in Scott H. Faulring, ed., *The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith: An American Prophet’s Record* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 311. The full quotation is more cryptic and less specifically directed against Presbyterians than the above excerpt suggests: “The pagans, Roman Catholics, Methodists, and Baptists shall have peace in Nauvoo only they must be ground in Joe Smith’s mill. I have been in their mill. I was ground in Ohio and [New] York States—a Presbyterian smut machine—and [the] last machine was in Missouri and last of all I have through [the] Illinois smut machine. Those who come here must go through my smut machine and this is my tongue.” On December 29, 1835, Smith discovered that there had been some Presbyterians at one of his meetings and rejoiced in his journal that he had “exposed their abominations in the language of the scriptures.” *Ibid.*, 93. But thereafter, Smith seemed to lump Presbyterians indifferently with Methodists, Baptists, and other Protestant denominations, perhaps because farther west, Presbyterians were a limited threat to the LDS Church.

29. “Yea, he that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing—unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God” (Alma 26:22); “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Ne. 2:25).

30. “Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself” (2 Ne. 2:16); “Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil” (2 Ne. 2:27).

31. “Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but he hath given it free for all men” (2 Ne. 26:27).

32. “I work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith” (2 Ne. 27:23); “Behold, I say unto you, that the good shepherd doth call

you; yea, and in his own name he doth call you, which is the name of Christ; and if ye will not hearken unto the voice of the good shepherd, to the name by which ye are called, behold, ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd" (Alma 5:38).

33. "Continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved" (Omni 1:26); "And I would that ye should remember also, that this is the name that I said I should give unto you that never should be blotted out, except it be through transgression; therefore, take heed that ye do not transgress, that the name be not blotted out of your hearts" (Mosiah 5:11).

34. "Wherefore, all mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state, and ever would be save they should rely on this Redeemer" (1 Ne. 10:6); "Remember, after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved" (2 Ne. 10:24); "Behold, he changed their hearts; yea, he awakened them out of a deep sleep, and they awoke unto God" (Alma 5:7); "Now we see that Adam did fall by the partaking of the forbidden fruit, according to the word of God; and thus we see, that by his fall, all mankind became a lost and fallen people" (Alma 12:22); "Because of the fall our natures have become evil continually" (Eth. 3:2).

35. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith*, rev. ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 70. Brodie herself noted that she was able to handle "the political narrative much better than the theological matter, most of which bores me." Brodie, Letter to Dale L. Morgan, July 13, 1944, quoted in Newell G. Bringhurst, *Fawn McKay Brodie: A Biographer's Life* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 94.

36. The Doctrine & Covenants uses the term "elect" and "election" seven times—most memorably in referring to Emma Smith as "an elect lady" (D&C 25:3), but in all the LDS scriptures only the Zoramites are "elected."

37. Joseph might also have seen such an elevated pulpit as a boy of seven or eight during the time he spent living with his uncle, the Congregationalist Jesse Smith, in Salem, Massachusetts.

38. Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1993), 105.

39. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 28–30, 263.

40. The three pastors of Western Presbyterian Church, 1817–23, and the date of their entering that office, are Stephen M. Wheelock (April 1817), Jesse Townsend (August 1817), Daniel C. Hopkins, temporary officiator (January 1822). Benjamin B. Stockton became the pastor in February 1824. "Miscellaneous Church Files of Palmyra."

41. Franklin Bowditch Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1912), 4:695–96, largely assembled from an obituary in the *New York Observer*, September 1, 1838, 140. Although Dexter says that Townsend's wife was "two or three years his senior," they both died in 1838, he at seventy-two and she at eighty-three.

42. Jesse Townsend, *The History of the Church of Christ from the Days of the Apostles to the Year 1551 Abridged from the Five First Volumes of Milner's Church History* (Utica, [N.Y.]: Camp, Merrell & Camp, 1816); "An account of a work of divine grace in a revival of religion in Durham settlement, town of Freehold, county of Greene, state of New-York, communicated to the Editors by the Rev. Jesse Townsend, pastor of the church in that place," April 12, 1802, *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* 2 (June 1802): 469–71; "A Letter to the Editors, from the Rev. Jesse Townsend of New-Durham, State of New-York," June 1, 1803, *ibid.*, 4 (August 1803): 65–67; Townsend, Letter to Phineas Stiles, December 24, 1833, and Townsend, Letter to Elisha Camp, August 16, 1834, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 3:21–27; Townsend, Letters to David Selden, November [19?], 1792; February 23, 1808; September 11, 1811; January 2, 1813, David Selden Correspondence, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Conn.; Townsend, Sermon, November 28, 1819, "Miscellaneous Church Files of Palmyra."

43. Townsend, *The History of the Church of Christ*, vii.

44. "A Letter to the Editors, from the Rev. Jesse Townsend," *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*, 4 (August 1803): 65–67; "An account of a work . . .," 2 (June 1802): 470–71.

45. Townsend, Letter to David Selden, January 2, 1813.

46. "Rev. Jesse Townsend," *New-York Observer*, September 1, 1838, 140.

47. *Palmyra Register*, December 1, 1819, 3.

48. Townsend, Sermon, November 28, 1819, in "Miscellaneous Church Files of Palmyra"; the original is owned by Western Presbyterian Church, Palmyra, New York.

49. As an argument against Smith's presence at the Palmyra dedication, Townsend's later denunciation of Joseph as a man of "questionable character" and "low cunning" implies that the preacher knew the prophet only by reputation. Townsend, Letter to Phineas Stiles, December 24, 1833, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 3:20. In 1833, Townsend says that he has known of Smith for "ten years." If not a rounded figure, 1823 would put Townsend's knowledge later than his Palmyra pastorate.

50. Compare Doctrine and Covenants 109. Also curious is the fact that three phrases in this sermon, "execute vengeance," "fallen state," and "eternal

father” do not appear in the King James Version of the Bible but are in the Book of Mormon. “Delightsome” also appears once in this sermon, once in the KJV, and eight times in the Book of Mormon.

51. The nine stanzas of Palmyra’s “Dedicatory Ode” include the following:

In Temples sacred to his name,
His Saints assemble round his board;
Raise their hosannahs to the Lamb,
And taste the supper of the Lord.

Their songs seraphic shall they raise,
And Gabriel’s Lyre the notes resound;
Heaven’s full toned organ join the praise,
And world to world repeat the sound.

Palmyra Register, December 1, 1819, 3.

52. Douglas J. Davies, *An Introduction to Mormonism* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 89, 17.

On Balancing Faith in Mormonism with Traditional Biblical Stories: The Noachian Flood Story

Clayton M. White and Mark D. Thomas¹

Describing the religion of the Latter-day Saints, John Taylor said that it “embraces every principle of truth and intelligence pertaining to us as moral, intellectual, mortal and immortal beings, pertaining to this world and the world that is to come. We are open to truth of every kind, no matter whence it comes, where it originates or who believes in it. . . . A man in search of the truth has no particular system to sustain, no particular dogma to defend or theory to uphold.”² We are glad to belong to a religion and a university that are committed to the on-going quest for truth, especially when we find ourselves confronted with finite perspectives, conflicting evidence, and divergent knowledge claims. Our difficult aim in this article, then, is to assess the competing claims regarding the historical core of the biblical story of Noah’s flood. Our primary tools of observation come from the disciplines of biogeography (the distribution of organisms) and biodiversity (the variety of organisms).

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints often assume that their religion requires them to believe in Noah’s flood as a worldwide occurrence. Many Latter-day Saints do, in fact, hold this view of a worldwide flood. But there is more room in this ark than one might expect. It is our informal observation that a sizable group of Latter-day Saints also believe that Noah’s flood reports a local event. A third group of Latter-day Saints believes that the flood story is simply fiction, a position which members of all three groups recognize as unorthodox.

We hope to assess these historical perspectives in light of the best science that we can muster. We will argue in this article that there is overwhelming scientific evidence that the great flood described in the Bible could not have covered the whole Earth. We will conclude with observations about possible implications of this conclusion for believing Latter-day Saints.

In light of these differing beliefs, we recognize that *any* treatment of this topic is potentially divisive. Especially under such conditions, we have no desire to speak critically, uncharitably, or arrogantly. We lay no claim to authoritative doctrinal pronouncements. But we do hope that we might add constructive points to the discussion, while allowing room for competent opposing opinions in light of John Taylor's admonition to seek the truth.

While several events over the past dozen years prompted this article, a particularly telling experience occurred one day while a grandchild was sitting on White's lap. White asked what the child had learned in school that day. "Did you know, Grandpa, that there are mammals in Australia that lay eggs and they are found nowhere else but Australia?" "Yes," he said. "How did that happen?" was the response. White could not tell this child that they were dropped off there after the flood because that would not be of help in understanding the world in which that child would spend the next several decades. So he gave a brief and very watered-down version of the sequence in which animals appeared on the earth, how the continents have moved over the past eons of time, and the idea that there are regions where "relict" animals occur because of all those events.

Noah's flood is a remarkable and wonderful story of ultimate catastrophe, salvation, and new creation that most of us learned as children. The story has special significance in our time. Our understanding of this story has important implications for our stewardship over our planet, which faces its own potential ecological catastrophes, due largely to overwhelming human encroachment into ecosystems. So despite the controversial nature of the subject, we believe that a frank discussion of its historical core is worthy of consideration by Latter-day Saints.

A Brief Look at the Biblical Text

Before we examine scientific evidence regarding the flood, we will summarize a few features of the biblical worldview and the history of the text that relate to our scientific study.

The King James biblical text seems to present the flood as a historical event. Noah built an actual ark and took with him his family, seven each of every ritually clean “bird, beast, and creeping thing,” and two each of all ritually unclean birds, beasts, and creeping things (Gen. 7:2). When Noah and his company entered the ark, “all the fountains of the great deep [were] broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened,” and it rained for forty days and nights (Gen. 7:11–12).

This passage describes the ancient view of the world, according to which the earth below and the firmament above were surrounded by the cosmic waters of chaos. The Hebrews imagined that the earth floated on the waters below and was capped above by a semicircular dome, called the firmament or vault of heaven (*raqia*), with an unlimited reservoir of waters above the firmament. The firmament had openings in it to allow the waters above the firmament to fall in the form of rain. The waters below the earth were also unlimited. These waters symbolized chaos. Most texts in the Hebrew Bible assume this three-tiered world.³ In terms of the flood narrative, the waters “increased greatly upon the earth” and the “waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered” (Gen. 7:18–20). Noah continued in the ark until at least the seventeenth day of the seventh month (Gen. 8:4), and not until the tenth month did waters return to their places and the tops of mountains become visible.

The text certainly gives the impression that the flood was universal, killing all humans, birds, and other land life over all the earth (Gen. 7:22–23). Especially in the priestly strands of the narrative, “the Flood is the reversal of Creation, in which cosmos returns to chaos,”⁴ making its impact as universal as that of the creation had been. Given the cosmological world view of the ancients discussed above, it comes as no surprise that most early Jewish and Christian sources interpreted the flood as covering the entire Earth. For example, 1 Enoch 10:2, an apocryphal work, states that “the Deluge is about to come upon all the earth; and all that is in it will be destroyed.”⁵ However, some early Jewish texts did not describe the flood as covering the entire earth.⁶

The biblical story of the flood has parallels in other literature. The flood story in Genesis 6 begins with a cryptic reference to “the sons of God” having sexual relations with “the daughters of men”; this mixture of “giants” (*nephilim*) and mortals produced “mighty men,” heroes, or “men

of renown" (Gen. 6:4). Seeing the wickedness of this situation, however, God regretted that he had created humans and decided to destroy them with a flood (Gen. 6:6–7). The references to worldwide floods⁷ and sexual relations between divine beings and humans in an age of giants are reminiscent of several ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern myths. The flood story is "not only atypical of the Bible as a whole but also puzzling and controversial in the extreme."⁸ In short, it appears that the transmission of the biblical flood story was profoundly influenced by Near Eastern mythology.

The LDS Church has always believed that the Bible is the word of God only insofar as it is recorded, translated, and transmitted correctly (Eighth Article of Faith). Indeed, the Joseph Smith version of Genesis 6, found in Moses 8 of the Pearl of Great Price, renders this story with significant differences from the Old Testament.⁹ The Prophet clearly believed that there were textual and transmission problems with this particular story.

There is also a wide variance with how Church authors in the twentieth century dealt with this story. In his widely used *Mormon Doctrine*, Elder Bruce R. McConkie succinctly summarizes the traditional view: "In the days of Noah the Lord sent a universal flood which completely immersed the whole earth and destroyed all flesh except that preserved in the ark." His use of "immersed" echoes the long-standing LDS teaching that the Earth is a living creature that was baptized by immersion at the time of the flood. Elder McConkie evidently realized some of the scientific implications of his views, for he continued by dismissing the past two hundred years of geological science: "Many of the so-called geological changes in the earth's surface, which according to geological theories took place over ages of time, in reality occurred in a matter of a few short weeks incident to the universal deluge."¹⁰ He does not explain where his information came from or cite any source to support this view except Elder Joseph Fielding Smith.

Two decades earlier, Elder John A. Widstoe, trained as a chemist, had a much different perspective and approach to the flood. Elder Widstoe recognized that there were serious factual problems in the traditional belief regarding the flood. The title of his 1940 *Improvement Era* article and his subsequent book, *Evidences and Reconciliations*,¹¹ suggest his own approach to the subject. Widstoe took seriously factual perspectives on the flood made by then-current scientists. He recognized that the nar-

rators of the flood story were not eyewitnesses to the events and, hence, that the details of the story may not be reliable as history: "In fact, the details of the flood are not known to us," he states, and, as a result, used a suggestive and inconclusive approach and sought a tentative compromise between science and religion. Yet it seems clear that Elder Widstoe did not believe in the traditional view. He tentatively rejected the idea that water could have covered the entire earth: "It is doubtful whether the water in the sky and all the oceans would suffice to cover the earth so completely."¹² He suggested that the original writers may have relied on inaccurate traditions handed down from even earlier generations regarding the Genesis flood. "We should remember that when inspired writers deal with historical incidents they relate that which they have seen or that which may have been told them unless indeed the past is opened to them by revelation." Widstoe concluded: "The scriptures must be read intelligently."¹³

Elder Widstoe's statement is remarkable on several accounts. It is certainly not a traditional view and contradicts the claim that the highest mountains were under fifteen cubits of water. Hence, he opens the door to new ways of interpreting the flood. The denial of complete knowledge regarding the details of the facts of a flood is echoed by Morris Petersen, a former stake president, who wrote the entry on the flood for the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*.¹⁴ "The Great Flood" appears as a subdivision under the entry "Earth." He acknowledges the lack of empirical data to support a literal, universal flood and simply cites the same sort of material as Widstoe. Under the entry on "Noah," Andrew Skinner mentions the flood only in passing: "[Noah] became second father—with Adam—of all mankind following the flood," and the remaining page or so of material discusses, as it should, Noah's importance and role as a prophet.

Elders McConkie and Widstoe agree on one area: the Earth's distinctive baptism during the flood. Since Elder Widstoe does not believe in a universal flood, he suggests that the "baptism" may have consisted of a universal rain storm that covered, however thinly, the face of the Earth with a coating of water.

Interest in the idea of a limited flood became prominent after the seventeenth century, when the size of the Earth and the nature of the water cycle became apparent to scientists.¹⁵ Accordingly, some modern commentators have suggested other ways of reading this story.¹⁶ One possibility is reading the story as a local flood consistent with the worldview of the

ancient Hebrews. For example, some recent commentators have argued that the Hebrew word *'eretz* is translated in the King James Version both as “land” and as “earth,” but twice as often as “land,” as in such phrases as “the land of Canaan” (Exod. 6:4), “the land of Egypt” (Gen. 41:33) or “the land which he promised them” (Deut. 9:28). Thus, they argue, the miraculous rainfall may have been localized to the whole face of a certain land or lands and need not necessarily refer to the entire planet.

Natural Science and the Flood

The current view of the world and the Earth’s history is quite different from the view presented in the Noachian story and in the ancient or prescientific world generally. Very naturally, therefore, one would expect to find a host of differences between our current understanding of the physical world and the story of the flood as presented in the Bible.

The traditional, universal flood story calls for a predictable series of events and patterns that follow as the waters subside. Predictability in religion is as important and compelling as it is in science and predictability is what also makes the scriptures useful in our lives and helps us build and maintain faith. Biblical stories should also have predictable events and outcomes to be useful. But the necessary results of a universal flood are not visible in the natural world. Scientific conclusions are generally tentative, by nature. Nevertheless, the geological record of the Earth yields no evidence of a worldwide flood, and biogeography does not support the idea that all current life forms had single source points some 4,300 years ago. (The flood is usually assigned a date of about 2350 B.C. based on biblical chronology.)

While much has been written about the flood over the years from the perspectives of geology and hydrology, little has been said about evidences from the life sciences, especially when couched in the framework of the flood’s proposed timing.¹⁷ Below is a simple array of evidences from plants and animals suggesting that the flood was not universal in scope. This evidence is selected from literally thousands of similar examples across a broad range of issues from biogeography and biodiversity. In these brief clips of information, we make no attempt to present more than a summary of the phenomenally complex variety of issues.

To help provide a sense of the biogeographic and biodiversity difficulties presented by a universal flood scenario, we have arranged a summary of simple selected examples under ten topics: (1) size, (2) timing, (3)

specialization, (4) islands, especially compared to continental land masses, (5) aquatic species and earthworms, (6) parasites and microorganisms, (7) endemic species, (8) plants, (9) entire ecological systems, and (10) the global distribution of life. The weight of this enormous body of scientific data is unequivocal in its testimony against a global flood.

1. Size

The ark contained insufficient space to house every bird species, let alone mammals, reptiles, insects, plants, and other life forms. Today, at least 9,672 named species are known just among birds. If Noah took seven of each of the clean and two of the unclean, then he had to fit approximately 67,704 individual birds into a space measuring 425x71x43'.¹⁸ Some were tropical hummingbirds; some were penguins from Antarctic; and others were flightless rails and now extinct moas from islands of the central south Atlantic and southern Pacific. These birds range in size from a 150-pound ostrich (or the 250-pound extinct New Zealand moa) down to a four-gram hummingbird. All available space in the ark would be used by the birds alone, if each had, on average, about 19 cubic feet (about 2.7 feet cubed), and this leaves no room for walkways, bird food for the lengthy journey, decks between floors, or anything else. If Noah could not fit in the 9,672 bird species, it is much less likely that he could find room for the other 1.5 million species so far identified on Earth.¹⁹

Perhaps fewer species existed then, or perhaps Noah did not take "species," but only higher categories of orders or families of organisms.²⁰ Either solution requires a belief in an unprecedented pace of evolution of species or a second creation after the flood for which no biblical stories, nor any scriptural, historical, or scientific evidence has ever been advanced. Any proponents of such thinking would find themselves advocates of the most extreme evolutionary theories and religious speculations, to the point of losing all scientific and religious credibility. In fact, such a view renders the original creation account irrelevant as a way of accounting for today's biodiversity; rather, only what remained after the flood should account for the enormous global biodiversity.

The biblical text states that the highest mountains were covered by fifteen cubits of water. This depth is not a problem in the Hebrew three-tiered view of the Earth with the unlimited waters above the firmament and below the Earth. But geological and earth sciences have very different perspectives about the Earth's size and its water cycle. The geologi-

cal features of the Earth have been only slightly modified in the past six thousand years. A finite amount of water is extant on the Earth. The continents, mountains ranges, and so forth are very much as they were when Noah is considered to have lived (based on interpretation of biblical chronology). Therefore, the traditional view has to explain (given what we know about the earth's water cycle) how its limited quantity of water could cover mountains that are in excess of twenty-five thousand feet.

2. *Timing*

When God first announced the flood and instructed Noah to build an ark, he said, "I am about to destroy" the human race, and "I am about to bring the waters of the flood over the earth" (Gen. 6:13–17). When the ark was finished, Noah entered in with all of the organisms he had been commanded to collect, and the flood began in seven days (Gen. 7:4). The text seems to imply a rapid sequence of events compatible only with a local set of animals. How did Noah have time to acquire animals from all land masses? No data, revealed or otherwise, suggest that the land masses did not exist as they now are (although some believe that the "division" of the Earth during the days of Peleg as stated in Genesis 10:25 implies a separation of continents), and that climates were not similar to the present during Noah's time period. Within a few days, did Noah gather, did God bring, or did the animals assemble themselves, from such distant and disparate places as South America, Australia, and the polar regions? The extent of animal life and land masses on Earth seems to make the timing of the traditional universal flood story unworkable.

3. *Specialization*

Many species of animals require highly specialized diets unavailable to Noah. The endearing koala of Australia is one of thousands of examples. (Koala fossils are found only in Australia.²¹) Few zoos are able to maintain them because of their specialized eucalyptus-leaf diets. Of more than six hundred species of eucalyptus trees²² in its native homeland of Australia, koalas eat only a few varieties.²³ Koala diets are so specialized that, if the diet is modified, they die. There are literally thousands of species so specialized that we are not yet able to maintain them in captivity.

Perhaps Noah had some mechanism of which we are unaware that allowed him to feed koalas their specialized diets. Or perhaps a very rapid

change in their physiology, morphology, and diets may have occurred. The improbability of these proposed solutions speaks for itself.

4. Islands Compared to Continental Land Masses

Continental islands are a particularly interesting case. We will use but two examples, Australia and Madagascar. Although Australia is a de facto “continent,” we treat it here as having the characteristics of an island. It possesses an accumulation of both pouched (such as the kangaroo) and egg-laying (such as the duck-billed platypus) mammals. In our understanding of the traditional view of a universal flood, the animals would have arrived in Australia from a central point where the ark alighted after the flood. Why would all marsupials (242 species currently known living) go to either Australia (most) or South America (the opossums) and not to the rest of the world as other mammals did? Did the ark stop off at various places to let such mammals out? Did Australia move to its present location after 2350 B.C. without being noticed and commented upon? Some Bible readers quickly evoke such a solution, interpreting the words “division of the earth” (Gen. 10:25) to suggest that this event referred to continental movement. But animals such as the marsupial mole would need to have been physically carried to their location by some power beyond their own because they could not dig that far. Moles in the eastern United States are apparently unable to cross the Rocky Mountains to reach the western United States. Because placental mammals outnumber pouched or egg-laying mammals worldwide by about fifteen to one, why are the former less represented in Australia, which has 159 marsupials but only 65 placental land mammals? (These figures exclude the 69 species of placental bats.)

Likewise, Australia has 765 known reptile species (snakes, lizards, and crocodiles), the largest number of reptile species of any land mass. Of these, 90 percent are endemic to Australia, meaning that they are found nowhere else. Madagascar, also a “continental” island because it was at one time connected to Africa, has three hundred reptile species so far identified, 95 percent of which are endemic.²⁴ One must wonder why reptiles would move differentially to Australia and Madagascar? Why would Australia and Madagascar collect species different from those found in New Guinea or Africa? Movement from a single point source, inherent in the understanding of a universal flood, does not explain any of these or thousands of other similar circumstances.

A second issue posed by island/continental land mass characteristics is that of island ecologies. Oceanic islands, unlike the continental islands, arise as new land from the ocean, beginning as hot lava. They are therefore not inhabited by life forms in their beginnings, yet many flightless organisms, especially birds, occupy them today. Flightless birds were there when the first humans arrived (e.g., Polynesians in Hawai'i around A.D. 500, Maoris in New Zealand around A.D. 1000). They exist in several conditions and stages of flightlessness, which in turn correlates with the island's degree of isolation and the length of time that island has existed. Of the more than two thousand presently described species of *Drosophila* (the common fruit fly so familiar during the fruit-bottling season), more than half of the species occur in Hawai'i. (This figure may be a bit misleading, however, since hundreds of species apparently exist in Southeast Asia but have not yet been described.) Some Hawai'ian flies are flightless. Mountains, such as Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa topped by its glaciers, are also essentially islands (as are a multitude of other geographical features) that are surrounded by drastically different habitats. Many flightless species occur on Mount Kilimanjaro also.²⁵ The flightless and wingless Wekiu bug (family *Lygaeidae*) developed locally only on the glacial summits of Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea on the Big Island of Hawai'i. It survives by eating wind-wafted insects that land on the glacier and has developed "antifreeze-like" fluids in its body.²⁶ Again, a universal flood does not account for these circumstances.

5. Aquatic Animals and Earthworms

One might think that, because the world was covered with water, animals living in water would not pose a problem. That is not, however, the case as two examples show.

Pupfish, specialized "minnow-like" fish, live in hot, clear, alkaline desert ponds in the Great Basin in the western United States; their ecological counterparts exist in various parts of the world. They are currently classified as endangered because simple human-caused changes in water quality and habitat are threatening them with extinction.²⁷ A universal flood would destroy the environment they need to survive. Other types of fish require either marine (salt water) or strictly fresh water for survival. Why didn't the flood destroy them?

Perhaps affected species had a different physiology before the flood? Perhaps they were created after the flood? Or perhaps the water sorted it-

self by salinity and temperature to accommodate all fish? No mechanisms for a universal flood would allow such fish to survive, especially in the specialized locations where they currently occur. No record has been found of their being carried there by humans. Certainly, the first humans to invade the Americas did not have the means to transport pupfish from where the ark landed. And why would they want to?

A second example is crayfish. About 540-plus known species of freshwater crayfish (or “crawdad”) exist worldwide. Two centers of diversity are found at two rather distant locations. The largest number exist in the southeast United States with more than three hundred species, accounting for about 61 percent of the total number of species, while the next major location is in southeast Australia with thirty-plus in Victoria and fifteen-plus on Tasmania.²⁸

Explaining such distribution is not easy, but the evidence suggests that their diversity accumulated through a series of isolation events caused by such well-recognized and well-documented phenomena as ice-age advances and retreats, acting on an organism with an ancient Gondwanaland distribution. If crayfish had spread on their own from a central location, they would have needed corridors of fresh water that connected all of the continents. This pattern exists in the southeast United States and is mirrored by other organisms in that region.

A third example is earthworms. Even from childhood, we are aware that, following a heavy rainstorm, earthworms leave their burrows and many drown on sidewalks and in gutters. Unless earthworms of a wide variety were taken onto the ark, how would they have survived the flood waters? Equally importantly, if they had one starting point, why are not the giant species (some three yards long) equally distributed rather than localized in South Africa, Sri Lanka, northern South America, and southeastern Australia?²⁹

6. *Parasites and Microorganisms*

Endoparasites, found in humans and other animals, are often restricted to their specific host or perhaps to a series of specific intermediate hosts. As examples, (1) a family of very diverse frogs that occur both in South America and in Australia share the same parasite found nowhere else among frogs; (2) the human parasites that cause Chagas’s disease in tropical America are related (same genus but different species) to the parasite that causes African sleeping sickness on the African continent, but no

comparable analog is found in Eurasia; and (3) regions in which humans are most afflicted by vector-transmitted parasites (usually some insect) are found in seemingly the greatest numbers in Africa, followed by the Far East.

One might wonder who on the ark carried the human head and pubic lice—although the answer is, Probably everyone in the ancient world. Who or which animals carried the AIDS-causing virus or the syphilis-causing spirochete organism? Were the reservoirs for the influenza, whose yearly cycles seem to always start in Asia, or the common cold virus, also on the ark?³⁰

Distributions of such life forms require host organisms. Such hosts on the ark would have needed to carry the full suite of these parasites collectively or intermediate host carriers would have had to have them. Those organisms mentioned above are not found today in the Middle East (around “Ararat,” the ark’s proposed resting place), nor is the intermediate host of African sleeping sickness, the tsetse fly. The current distribution of frog parasites can be explained scientifically by the fact that a very old family of frogs existed at the time the southern continents were connected through Antarctica, before it was largely icebound. Thus, the family shared a continuous and connected range. Human parasites have been separated so long that they have undergone speciation not consistent with a more recent single source of origin. Lastly, vectors that transmit the large array of human problems typically occur in certain environments that seem to be specific to them. In other words, even though human migration has criss-crossed the earth, human beings have not been able to carry certain diseases with them. Therefore, either the disease carrier on the ark had to maintain the life cycle of the vector/disease over several, perhaps hundreds, of generations until humans dispersed into the appropriate environment or the vector/parasite/transmission cycle has undergone radical changes. Perhaps other logical alternatives are possible.

7. Endemic Species and/or Groups

The New World, for example, has many unique groups of animals not found, even in a rather extensive fossil record, outside of the Americas, some confined strictly to South America. Sloths, armadillos, and hummingbirds are examples of exclusively New World animals. Three-toed sloths have limbs adapted only for hanging, usually upside down, or climbing in trees by long, hook-shaped claws. Sloths can descend to the

ground but have great difficulty standing and cannot walk, although they can drag their bodies along by their front legs for short distances. They swim more slowly over long distances than they can drag themselves.³¹ These circumstances suggest a long developmental history in place, rather than distribution from a single point after a flood.

Hummingbirds, of which some 328 species have been described, are restricted to the New World and have never during historical or prehistorical times (based on the fossil record) existed elsewhere. They range from southeast Alaska to Tierra del Fuego in South America and from sea level to at least 15,000 feet in the Andes Mountains. The greatest number are, of course, tropical with the most species in Equador and Columbia.³²

8. Plants

As most people know, most trees produce growth rings, one for each year of life. Rings may show varying thicknesses, depending on growing conditions for that specific year of growth. The bristlecone pine occurs on high mountain tops, usually above 9,000 feet, at scattered locations in Colorado, Utah, Nevada, California, and Arizona. The oldest intact record of age from growth rings for a single tree is more than five thousand years.³³ Cross-matching rings within a given tree, however, has produced a continuous age for a single tree of more than ninety-three hundred years,³⁴ thus predating the flood by about forty-three hundred years. This species of pine is not known outside the New World, even in the fossil record, nor can pines survive submersion under water beyond a few weeks.

Principal human grain foods are corn, wheat, and rice. Each is native to different parts of the world. All were certainly not carried by humans emerging from one location after the flood subsided, or they would not have had the distribution they had. Corn was seemingly known only in the New World and was “discovered” by Europeans when the conquistadors arrived. Wheat was known only from the Middle East and Europe, and rice is native to Asia. A universal flood does not account for these circumstances.

9. Entire Ecological Systems

Within plant and animal communities, some organisms are called “keystone” species. These species structure that particular community; around them other creatures are clustered and, in significant part, depend. When the keystone species is lost (say, through extinction), the

community frequently breaks down through a series of cascading events. A species may be a keystone in one area but not in another simply because of the structure of that particular community. An example is the prairie dog from U.S. Midwest and West. These animals modify the landscape with their burrows and grazing; they also provide necessary conditions for other species that cluster around them such as larks, mountain plovers, black-footed ferrets, etc. To remove the keystone species of an ecosystem usually spells the collapse of the entire system. In ecologically similar habitats, say, in Africa or South America, different keystone species within that community of species occur but provide the same function. So, either the different keystones with their associated species were let off together from the ark in different locations and the dependant species had to wait for appropriate habitat modifications, or they migrated together as a cohesive unit to that location from Ararat, or an elaborate co-evolution from location to location has occurred since about 2350 BCE. None of these hypotheses seems to adequately account for the data.

Deserts appear on both the eastern and western hemispheres. They generally occur on the west sides of continents in the western hemisphere; in Australia and near the Tropic of Cancer in the northern hemisphere; and near the Tropic of Capricorn in the southern hemisphere. Their distribution is explained by climate and ocean-flow patterns. Each desert has ecological and structural counterparts, often with genealogically distinct or totally unrelated animals and plants on each desert; examples are kangaroo rats in North America, jumping jerboas in Africa and Asia, and hopping mice in Australia.

We are left with the problem of how the climate and ocean current patterns that cause these deserts got established on a globe entirely covered by water in time for Noah to get the desert animals and plants to deserts after/before the appropriate land masses emerged from the flood waters. Or did they develop independently in the few short years between the flood and when they were recorded in written historical accounts from cultures living in those deserts?

10. Global Distribution of Life

If all animals started to repopulate the Earth from one focal point as in the case of Noah's flood, then we should be able to predict certain patterns. A few might be: (1) The greatest diversity should be at the focal point. (2) There should be an accumulation of slowly dispersing animals

relative to fast-moving animals at the focal point. (3) Radiation outward from that focal point should proceed along logical patterns, perhaps equally in all directions or perhaps dictated by mountains, valleys, rivers, etc. (4) As many “primitive” animals as “advanced” animals should be at the focal point.

However, the distribution of life that we actually observe around the planet does not support the idea that all life emerged or reemerged in the relatively recent geological past from a single location.³⁵

In sum, we are aware of no well-developed scientific or physical evidence that supports a universal flood. To maintain the traditional view of a universal flood, we must either appeal to a host of simultaneous, astonishing, and miraculous events (water from outer space, shrinking animal size or acceleration of the pace of evolution, massive geological change in the space of weeks, miraculous transportation, special creations after Noah, and so forth), or we must abandon the pillars of the natural sciences altogether. For those who maintain the historicity of a universal flood, the burden of proof remains upon them to explain the large body of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Implications for Latter-day Saints

What are the implications of this scientific evidence for faithful members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? Clearly, while tending toward traditional universal views of the flood, Latter-day Saints have a range of beliefs on the subject. These differences of opinion should indicate that we ought to allow faithful Latter-day Saints who disagree on this subject the freedom to accept whatever historical and scientific conclusions they may entertain about the flood. As authors, we choose to follow the general rule apparent in the LDS Church, which is to acknowledge respectfully the freedom of expression of, and tolerance for, those with differing conclusions regarding the flood. We consider this approach part of our joint Latter-day Saint quest to find truth. We hope that our fellow Latter-day Saints would allow us the same privilege; and, in fact, belief in a universal flood is generally not used as a litmus test of faith nor as an index of worthiness.

With this hope for tolerance, we also add our own opinion of the historicity of the flood. The very story of Noah’s ark and the flood assumes that the reader and narrator possess knowledge of a historical massive flood event that inspired the transmission of the story. But the long

textual history and the story's hidden sources make it clear to us that the details of that event are lost and that the narrative has almost surely undergone considerable alterations from the original text.

As we seriously explore the historical core of the story of Noah's ark and the flood, we are likely to encounter several possible temptations at odds with John Taylor's open quest for truth, cited in the opening of this paper. These temptations are to abandon either the text, science, or religion in our quest for truth about the story of Noah.

First, we invite readers to think about the consequences of eliminating science from the dialogue. To abandon science seems contrary to the spirit of LDS teachings on the subject. In the First Presidency's 1910 Christmas message, Joseph F. Smith said, "Our religion is not hostile to real science. That which is demonstrated we accept with joy."³⁶ Brigham Young earlier fostered a positive attitude toward scientific learning by saying, "Teach the children, give them the learning of the world and the things of God; elevate their minds, that they may not only *understand the earth* we walk upon, but the air we breath, the water we drink, and all the elements pertaining to the earth." He also said, "How gladly would we understand every principle pertaining to science and art, and become thoroughly acquainted with every *intricate operation of nature*."³⁷ Similarly, Brigham Young taught that Latter-day Saints differed from the Christian world because the other churches "advance many ideas and notions for truth which are in opposition to and contradict facts *demonstrated by science*, and which are generally understood . . . for our religion will not clash with or contradict the facts of science in any particular."³⁸

Science is an indispensable ally in our religious stewardship over the land. The Doctrine and Covenants summarizes our obligation of stewardship over the Earth: "I the Lord . . . built the earth . . . and all things therein are mine . . . and if the properties are mine, then ye are stewards" (D&C 104:14, 56). Proper stewardship of the world develops through a proper understanding of its functions, which requires an accurate view of such questions as how things came to be.³⁹ We contend that an effective stewardship is difficult to acquire without knowing what we are stewards over. This precious scientific legacy has accumulated through investigations over the last two hundred years. It has given us a relatively clear and straightforward view of life's history and its distribution on earth.

Rejecting the factual findings of science may result in very damaging treatment of the earth—the opposite of what the Noah story is teaching.

One of our greatest legacies is the biodiversity of organisms on the Earth. We live in a world that is rapidly being impoverished by the loss of diversified habitats and organisms—essentially a loss of the “creation.” In scientific parlance, the result is called biodiversity decay or ecological decay. It is humankind’s lack of knowledge that has (in large part) led to the magnitude and the geometrically increasing rate of loss in biodiversity that we have witnessed over the past several decades. Appreciation, based on an understanding of natural events, is the best way for us to protect biodiversity. For all of these reasons, we consider science an important contributor to our understanding of the Noah story and a necessary help to us in fulfilling our religious duty and moral stewardship.

Accepting the role of science in discussing the historicity of the Noah story may have the potential of rejecting the proper place of religion in the dialogue. By rejecting religion, we eliminate the language and modes of thought that are most central to the establishment of values. But religion is not just the expression of values; it is the depth element in all cultural manifestations, including science. Once values are taken out of the discussion of nature, we run the risk of completely objectifying nature, an attitude that unfortunately underpins much current economic thought. Objectification of nature is both a blessing and a curse. Objectification of nature requires the inclusion of a value system to give it proper perspective. Religion is the primary manifestation and advocate of social values. Therefore, if we are to have an impact on social norms regarding nature, we must involve religious institutions and theology. As an illustration, it seems doubtful that slavery would have been abolished in the United States without the strong religious values held by many abolitionists.⁴⁰

The dialogue proposed by John Taylor must include the religious perspective if it is to succeed. To gauge the LDS interpretive history on Noah’s flood, we have examined a large representative sample of nearly four hundred sermons from Church leaders who discuss Noah and the flood. These sermons were from the *Journal of Discourses* (which contains sermons as early as 1854) and from the *Conference Reports* from 1900 to 1970. These speeches were central public discourses that cover teachings from Brigham Young through Church leaders still living, from the nineteenth century through a majority of the twentieth century. In other words, although not exhaustive, this survey covered a large portion of LDS history. We believe that this large sample gives a reliable profile of

how LDS leaders have interpreted the story of Noah's flood in public sermons.

Though many Latter-day Saints have adopted the traditional view of a universal flood, they have a variety of views on the historical core of the story, even among the pronouncements of LDS leaders, as we have already noted. Much of the evidence from the Genesis text and from sermons of Church leaders is either silent or ambiguous on the factual issues surrounding the flood. In LDS sermons, Noah is clearly understood to be a historical character, and the flood is usually assumed to be a historical event. Other than these two implicit assumptions, rarely are historical claims about the flood expressed in LDS sermons. LDS leaders have demonstrated far more interest in the story's moral, social, and existential symbolism than in its historical details. The point of these sermons is how to exercise faith, how to live in a corrupt world about to be destroyed, how to maintain faith in the LDS Church despite the scoffing of critics, and so forth. We suspect that current Latter-day Saints will continue to use Noah's story as a religious and literary model, just as in the past.

At the end of the Noah story, God made a covenant with humanity, which included human accountability for nature (Gen. 9:1-8). God then covenanted to never totally destroy life again, not only with humans but also with "all that live on earth." This is a covenant between God and all living creatures, with humans acting as God's stewards. Living creatures are a "Thou" and are therefore intimately associated with an ethic of respect for all life. This is a story addressing immediate ethical concerns in our age. It speaks of the destruction of life and the preservation of species. Many LDS leaders have understood this story as primarily ethical. Yet in the workaday world, nature is often treated as an object, a scarce economic commodity to be discarded if the whims of the market dictate. This view of nature is foreign to the human stewardship of life articulated in the Noah story.

To enter into Noah's covenant of life is to take upon us the obligation to be accountable for the earth's preservation as articulated in this biblical passage. As we seek to survive despite the increasingly dangerous challenges that confront and surround us, we should use every tool possible for finding the truth. Each discipline that is brought to bear upon this task of finding truth contains perspectives and methodologies appropriate to its particular approach. Science concerns itself primarily with facts about the world, scriptural scholars with the meaning of texts, and reli-

gions with ethics, meaning, and values. Hence, a combined approach in which science, religion, and textual critics combine forces in the spirit of John Taylor's embrace of truth may yield new perspectives and insights into the narrative of Noah and the flood for LDS readers.

Furthermore, such a combined search will help us bring to life the sorrows and hopes of a world struggling for decency and survival. Such an open and honest search for truth, with its promise of survival, seems to be a fundamental and necessary tenet of our religion. Without facts from science, religion struggles for direction in its stewardship. Without the values that are the essence of religion, science and economics may become prisons of meaningless and heartless facts. If it is to succeed, the covenant of life articulated in the Noah story must be honest to the fundamental message of the text, guided by the light of science and inspired by the music of religion.

Notes

1. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: This is the article mentioned at the beginning of Duane Jeffery, "Noah's Flood: Modern Scholarship and Mormon Tradition," *Sunstone*, Issue 136 (October 2004): 27–45. He describes two Brigham Young University faculty members who wrote the article and submitted it to *BYU Studies*. After some three years and about five major revisions to suit the editor, *BYU Studies* essentially accepted the article. After yet another review by another panel, the article was rejected.

Scores of people have commented on and critiqued the manuscript. They have been in and out of academia, within the field of religious instruction, especially at BYU, and outside, and from various scientific disciplines. All of those named below are active, believing Latter-day Saints. Several rejected our conclusions but nonetheless offered valuable comments. We alone are responsible for the wording and conclusions. The large majority of these contributors are faculty colleagues, former or present, and graduate students at BYU. We thank all those who have offered comments, but in particular Russell Ball, Mark C. Belk, Alvin K. Benson, Hal L. Black, David Bos, William S. Bradshaw, S. Kent Brown, Kevin Colver, David H. Ellis, Ann Ellison, Lynn J. England, Jerran T. Flinders, Wilfred C. Griggs, Parry J. Hardin, Richard W. Heninger, Ned C. Hill, Clayton S. Huber, Kent P. Jackson, Duane E. Jeffery, Jayson Lloyd, Thomas ("Ted") Lyon, Brian A. Maurer, Harold L. Miller, Markus Mika, Clark S. Monson, Spencer R. Mortenson, Donald W. Parry, George L. Peterson, W. Revell Phillips, McKay L. Platt, Elder Hugh W. Pinnock, Alan K. Parrish, Morris S. Petersen, Erland D. Peterson, Noel B.

Reynolds, Scott M. Ritter, Tom S. Smith, Phil Snelgrove, Ted Stoddard, Merle Tanner-White, Richard R. Tolman, Benjamin J. Weibell, John W. Welch, Ballard T. White, Scott Woodward, and the many students in the Honor's Colloquia classes, 241-R, "Shaping the Modern Mind"; 221R, "Environment, Society, and Culture"; and Zoology 204, "Animal Diversity." Several others offered significant suggestions and criticisms but asked not to be mentioned because they felt the topic was not their expertise or because they no longer considered themselves "believing" Mormons.

2. John Taylor, February 1, 1874, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1855–86), 16:369–70.

3. David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), s.v. "Cosmology." Even assuming a three-tiered world there are other considerations. J. Ronald Galli, former dean of sciences at Weber State University, Ogden, Utah, sent us the following observation (email, February 7, 2007): "1 cubit = 20 inches so 15 cubits = 300 inches = 25 feet. If the entire atmosphere were nothing but water vapor, and if all that vapor were to condense out as water (liquid) and if all the land were at an altitude of sea level, then the water depth over the land and the increased water depth of the oceans, seas, and lakes would be less than 34 feet. This is based on the atmospheric pressure at sea level being 14.7 pounds per square inch. This means that the total quantity of air directly above every square inch of the earth's surface has a weight of only 14.7 pounds. This also means that a 1 square inch column of water 34 feet high would weigh 14.7 pounds. Since the actual amount of water vapor in the atmosphere is less than 1% of all gases, the flood depth from the condensation of all water in the atmosphere would be less than 1 foot."

4. Ed Noort, "The Stories of the Great Flood: Notes on Gen. 6:5–9:17 in Its Context of the Ancient Near East," in *Interpretations of the Flood*, edited by Forentino Garcia Martinez and Gerald P. Luttinhuizen (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1999), 21.

5. Similarly, 1 Enoch 66–67, 83, 89; 2 Enoch 33:12; 3 Enoch 4; Apocalypse of Adam 3:1–7; Testament of Adam 3:5; 2 Baruch 56:15; Hellenistic Synagogal Prayers 12:58–59; Jubilees 5:20–32; Sibylline Oracles 1:230; and the Book of Adam and Eve 49:3.

6. Other early Jewish sources (the Babylonian Talmud and the Mishnah) "construe the Flood essentially as a warning to mankind," reading it "as a literary construction in which word plays and etymological puns" were more indicative of its universal moral content than of historical content. James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, N.Y.:

Doubleday, 1985). These sources contain debates about whether the flood could have covered certain holy places. An interesting example appears in Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*, written sometime around the first century B.C. In chapter 3:3 and 7 this work speaks of the flood in universal terms: "I will blot out man"; "only Noah and those who were with him in the ark survived." But in 7:4, it contains a statement by God to Abraham about the flood and the land of promise: "I will bring him out from their land and will bring him into the land upon which my eye has looked from of old, when all those inhabiting the earth sinned in my sight and I brought the water of the flood and I did not destroy it but preserved that land. For neither did the springs of my wrath burst forth on it, nor did the water of my destruction descend on it." In *ibid*.

7. For a summary of Near Eastern flood myths, see Ewa Wasilewska, *Creation Stories of the Middle East* (London: Jessica Kingsley Press, 2000), 174–84; Norman Cohn, *Noah's Flood: The Genesis Story in Western Thought* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996). Many biblical scholars believe that the current flood narrative in Genesis is a composite of two earlier Hebrew narratives known as P and J. For a discussion of these two sources, see Norman C. Habel, "The Two Flood Stories in Genesis," in *The Flood Myth*, edited by Alan Dundes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 13–29; J. David Pleins, *When the Great Abyss Opened* (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford University Press, 2005), 26–30.

Despite these claims to multiple sources, general unifying features in the narrative allow us to approach the flood story as a single narrative. Many mainstream biblical scholars believe the P and J flood narratives to be derived from Mesopotamian mythologies which contain flood narratives. The earliest flood narratives were apparently first written by the Sumerians, the most famous being the myth of Gilgamesh. Alfred L. Kroeber, *Anthropology: Race, Language, Culture, Psychology, Prehistory* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1948), gives a brief overview of the flood legends in various cultures and religions. The variety of stories and variations on them are not wholly comparable, especially in a spatial context. Additionally, most cultures also have stories of volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, fires, and other natural phenomena they did not necessarily understand and to which they attached spiritual, divine, or religious meaning. Symbolism is common throughout such stories. For example, Folki, the great Viking sailor of the ninth century, found Iceland, so the story goes, by sending up a raven from the ship to lead him there. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Discoverers* (New York: Random House, 1983), 217. The raven was, of course, as symbolic to the Vikings as the dove and olive

tree were symbolic in biblical times; interestingly, Noah also used a raven as the first messenger released.

Some have argued from geological and geophysical data that the Black Sea resulted from a flood from the Mediterranean Sea around 5600 B.C., possibly accounting for the story in that part of the world. Don McInnis, "And the Waters Prevailed," *Earth* 7 (August 1998): 46–54, compares and relates the Genesis account and older Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh to the events surrounding the formation of the Black Sea. These events are well described by William Ryan and Walter Pitman, *Noah's Flood: The New Scientific Discoveries about the Event that Changed History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998) and Pleins, *When the Great Abyss Opened*, 3–14. A recent essay with an analysis of the Black Sea hypothesis relevant to the Noah story is Jeffery, "Noah's Flood: Modern Scholarship and Mormon Tradition." See also the computer model that matches the geological data for the Black Sea phenomena in Mark Siddall, "Noah's Flood," *Nature*, August 2004, 718–19.

Cultural evidence suggests that the flood was not universally known. For example, Egypt has had a continuously written record during the time frame suggested for Noah, but does not mention the flood. Since the invention of the wheel around 3400 B.C. near the Black Sea, there has been a rather continuous historical record for that region as well, Trevor Williams, *The History of Invention* (New York: Facts on File/Equinox, 1989). These cultures do not speak of a flood that killed all living creatures. Josephus quotes an account by Nicolaus of Damascus about the large mountain in Armenia onto which many people (not just one family) fled to escape the flood. William Whiston, trans., *Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews*, 2d printing (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publ., 1963), 27–30. Joshua 24:2, comments: "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood . . . even Terah, the father of Abraham." Although interpretations vary, most biblical scholars consider "flood" in this context to mean a river. S. Kent Brown, personal verbal communication.

Early Native Americans (First Nation people) in the western United States could have included a flood story in their mythology. An estimated 12,700 years ago, the 600-cubic mile Pleistocene glacial Lake Missoula breached its dam formed across Clark Fork Valley and discharged at least 484 million cubic feet per second, scouring what is now the channeled scabland of eastern Washington. Native peoples in the Great Basin 14,000 years ago would also have witnessed Lake Bonneville overflowing the barrier at Red Rock Pass (near present-day McCammon, Idaho) and passing through the Snake River, in some places 400 feet deep at the estimated rate of 33,018,000 feet per second. Donald K. Grayson, *The Desert's Past: A Natural Prehistory of*

the Great Basin (Washington, D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 90–91.

8. Ephraim A. Speiser, *Anchor Bible: Genesis* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), 45.

9. In Moses 8:14, the “sons of men” took their own daughters incestuously as wives; God resolved, “If men do not repent, I will send in the floods upon them” (v. 17). There were also “giants on the earth” who sought to kill Noah (Moses 8:18). When the children of men would not repent, they came to Noah claiming “we are the sons of God”; and because they were overconfident of their powers as mortals, eating, drinking, and procreating, they refused to listen to Noah (v. 21); and for their continuous wickedness, corruption and violence, and because they sought Noah’s life (vv. 22, 26, 29–30), they were eventually destroyed.

10. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 289.

11. John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliation: Aids to Faith in a Modern Day*, Vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1943), 109–12, and “Did the Waters of the Flood Cover the Highest Mountains of Earth?” *Improvement Era*, June 1940, 353. See also Widtsoe’s discussion of the importance of science and facts as a fundamental paradigm of science and how they interface with faith in the discipline of religion. As he remarks, “Science is knowledge. . . . The sum of human experience is the sum of scientific knowledge.” Widtsoe, *In Search of Truth: Comments on the Gospel and Modern Thought* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1930), 17–18; Alan K. Parrish, *John A. Widtsoe: A Biography* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 366–73.

12. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliation*, 109–12.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Morris S. Petersen, “Earth,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1992), 2:432; Andrew C. Skinner, “Noah,” *ibid.*, 3:1016–17.

15. Interestingly, nearly twenty years before Widtsoe’s comments, Frederick J. Pack, also a scientist, a member of the general Sunday School superintendency, and a member of Apostle Anthony W. Ivins’s prayer circle, wrote *Science and Belief in God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1924), in which he reached the same conclusion that Widtsoe and we did (see pp. 212–15, 220–21), although Pack did not use the sorts of data we did.

16. Rienk Vermij, “The Flood and the Scientific Revolution: Thomas Burnet’s System, of Natural Providence,” in *Interpretations of the Flood*, edited by Martinez and Luttikhuisen, 150–66. For further interpretations of the

flood, see Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*; Cohn, *Noah's Flood*; Jack P. Lewis, *A Study of the Interpretations of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1986); and Pleins, *When the Great Abyss Opened*. There were questions about the accuracy of the flood story as early as 1660 and into the early eighteenth century, a period known as the Age of Enlightenment. Alfred Newton, Robert Boyle, Edmund Halley, and William Dampier, for example, were scientists of the time. Readers wrote to the *Athenian Gazette* with such questions as what became of the water after the flood. John Lindsay, *The Monster City: Defoe's London, 1688–1730* (London: Granada, 1978), 87–89; and Diana and Michael Preston, *A Pirate of Exquisite Mind: Explorer, Naturalist, and Buccaneer—The Life of William Dampier* (New York: Walker and Company, 2004), 232–33.

17. Pleins, *When the Great Abyss Opened*, 55–94, engages geology, paleontology, mathematics, and other hard sciences and disciplines, but does not mention biogeography or biodiversity. Timing becomes especially important to the Latter-day Saints because the standard scriptures have simply adopted traditional dating systems. “For the earliest parts of the O.T. history we rely entirely on the scripture itself; but . . . many dates cannot be fixed with certainty,” according to the “Chronology” in the “LDS Bible Dictionary,” LDS edition (1979, 1987 printing) of the King James Bible, 635–36. The standard view is that this event occurred roughly 2350 B.C. However, that date and the flood’s timing was based on traditions coming from the 1650s. The calculations are by Archbishop James Ussher of the Church of Ireland, and some of his dates “have been shown to be incorrect.” “LDS Bible Dictionary.”

18. This figure assumes that 0.009 percent of all the birds were “not clean.”

19. Estimates of Earth’s species range as high as 10 million (100 million, by some liberal estimates), of which a vast number are aquatic and certainly microscopic. We have estimated a rather conservative 1.5 million (about the number presently named or “known”) as those necessary for Noah to save in the ark.

20. James R. Christianson, *Noah, the Ark, the Flood: A Pondered Perspective* (Salt Lake City: Randall Book, 1986), 47–48.

21. Pat V. Rich and E. M. Thompson, *The Fossil Vertebrate Record of Australia* (Victoria, Australia: Monash University Offset, 1988).

22. Harry Reicher, D. Lunney, and I. Dunn, *The Natural Legacy Ecology of Australia* (New York: Pergamon, 1979), 147.

23. Ronald Straham, ed. *The Australian Museum Complete Book of Australian Mammals* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1983), 112–13.

24. Tim F. Flannery, *The Future Eaters: An Ecological History of the Australian Lands and People* (Chatswood, New South Wales: Reed Books, 1996), 108–16; and Peter Tyson, *The Eighth Continent: Life, Death and Discovery in the Lost World of Madagascar* (Scranton, Penn.: HarperCollins, 2001), xv–xx.

25. Sherwin Carlquist, *Island Life: A Natural History of the Islands of the World* (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1965); James Farmer, personal verbal communication.

26. Francis G. Howarth and William P. Mull, *Hawaiian Insects and Their Kin* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), 28–29, 47; Philip Bruner, professor of biology, BYU-Hawai'i, personal verbal communication.

27. James E. Deacon and Cindy D. Williams, "Ash Meadows and the Legacy of the Devil's Hole Pupfish," in *Battle against Extinction: Native Fish Management in the American West*, edited by William L. Minkley and James E. Deacon (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991), 69–87.

28. Horton H. Hobbs, "Crayfish Distribution, Adaptive Radiation and Evolution," in *Freshwater Crayfish: Biology, Management and Exploitation*, edited by David M. Holdich and Roger S. Lowery (London: Croom Helm, 1988), 57–82.

29. Stephen C. Ayala, Calvin Johnson, Beth Morris, Brian Rooney, Anna Stuart, and Barry Woodhull, "A Colony of Giant Andean Earthworms," *Bioscience* 22 (May 1972): 299–301.

30. Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fate of Human Societies* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997); Gary Taubes, "The Cold Warriors," *Discover* 20, no. 2 (February 1999): 40–50.

31. Ronald M. Nowak, *Walker's Mammals of the World*, 5th ed., 2 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 1:515–21.

32. J. Del Hoyo, A. Elliott, and J. Sargatal, eds., *The Handbook of the Birds of the World*, 11 vols. to date (Barcelona: Lynx Ediciones, 1999), 5:468–680.

33. D. R. Curry, "An Ancient Bristlecone Pine Stand in Eastern Nevada," *Ecology* 46, no. 4 (July 1965): 564–66.

34. Blaine Furness, Department of Botany, Brigham Young University, personal verbal communications.

35. We approach the Noah flood story in terms of the distribution of animals that are now (though not necessarily recently) extinct, an approach elaborated by Janet Browne, *The Secular Ark: Studies in the History of Biogeography* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983). Many other paradigms should be expected. Events such as the volcanic explosion of Mount St. Helens, Krakatoa, or Tambora help us understand how fast "new"

land may be occupied when life already exists nearby but reveal little more about the pattern. We cannot predict how human movement over the Earth's surface might proceed nor how the artificial transport of animals might be reflected. It is clear, however, that certain sorts of organisms either would or would not be transported by humans. The discipline of biogeography provides literally thousands of examples, if not millions depending on how finely we divide the examples, relative to the distribution of organisms such as those given in the text. Such examples are so extensive that a simple list would fill a very large book indeed. David Quammen, *The Song of the Dodo* (New York: Scribner, 1996), only briefly touched on the topic, yet reported a seventeen-pound pile of reprints on his desk with another forty to fifty pounds of related literature in his files. We have used only a few statements to indicate a diversity of patterns. Most of this information can be found in any college biology or ecology text and therefore needs no supporting references. We have avoided using examples that rely on radiocarbon or other dating methods. Such methods produce an entirely different data set that would require a good deal of background knowledge, and some people who might read this article are not entirely comfortable with the methodology anyway.

36. First Presidency, "Christmas Message," *Desert Evening News*, December 17, 1910, Pt. 1, p. 3. Smith's counselors were then Anthon H. Lund and John Henry Smith.

37. John A. Widtsoe, comp. and ed., *Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1925), 251, 258; emphasis ours.

38. Brigham Young, May 14, 1871, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1855–86), 14:115–16; emphasis ours.

39. We think it important to understand Noah's role as a prophet of God. But at the same time, we hope readers will equally understand that the patterns and locations of the distribution of life on Earth are just as important to accurately understand as, say, why medicines work on diseases, why disease micro-organisms mutate into resistant strains so rapidly under the selection pressures of chemical medicines, why genes affect the development of embryos, why the moon has a full, waning, new, and waxing cycle, why the water we drink or air we breathe is made available through cycles, why global climates are all interrelated, and so forth. An understanding of these processes, however, is not a part of our scriptural heritage.

40. Fergus M. Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), argues that the entire fight for abolition was fueled by religious values.



Allan West; *First Frost*; gold leaf, coral, quartz, mica, deer bone glue binder; on Japanese mulberry paper; 910 cm x 727 cm; collection of Mr. U.

The Death and Resurrection of the RLDS Zion: A Case Study in “Failed Prophecy,” 1930–70¹

David J. Howlett

On Resurrection Sunday, April 1930, Bishop J. A. Koehler of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints attended a priesthood prayer meeting at the Stone Church RLDS congregation in Independence, Missouri.² After a week of solemn and joyful conference services remembering the past century of the denomination’s history, men from across the world sat seeking the Lord’s further direction before Easter services. Koehler rose to his feet and dramatically declared a vision he had been given. “I saw Jesus,” proclaimed Koehler. “Not Jesus the man, but Jesus the Way, the Truth, and the Life, crucified on a cross of gold.”³ Using language from Social Gospel Christianity, Koehler continued that he had seen Jesus “lying in a tomb of acquisitive institutions,” bound by grave cloths of “exploitive customs,” and sealed in a tomb by “the stone of ignorance and selfishness” under a new imperial authority—capitalistic “private interest.” In his dream, dejected Saints wept for their dead Lord. It seemed that greed and capitalism had won the day.

Yet out of grief and despair, Koehler envisioned a “great commotion” that woke the dead Lord from the grave. Representing the “Angel of God,” RLDS priesthood members rolled the rock away from the entrance to the tomb. As Jesus came forth from the tomb, Koehler saw not a physical body, but an incarnational Lord—a Social Gospel Lord—found in the “institutions of mutual helpfulness, and clothed with Divine understanding.”⁴ Through these institutions, Koehler believed that he saw the resurrection of Christ. Koehler’s incarnational Lord became “the word made flesh in the city of Zion,” meaning RLDS cooperative organizations and

education. According to Koehler, Zion—the RLDS model community that embodied Christ—would become an ensign to the world; the “eyes of the nations” would be fixed upon the Saints’ community. Triumphantly, Koehler proclaimed that the embodiment of Christ in Zion provided the rest of the world with true, authentic life. “He is risen!” declared the nations, “And because He lives, WE TOO shall live!”⁵

In his Easter morning vision, Bishop Koehler embodied his faith movement’s contradictions and hopes in modernity. Reorganized Latter Day Saints were in the process of modernizing their denomination, moving slowly toward a “sect to denomination” transformation.⁶ Church leaders like Bishop Koehler freely drew on Social Gospel theologians and progressive social thought in articulating the quite sectarian vision for the kingdom of God that RLDS members believed would be built as a physical community in Jackson County, Missouri.⁷ As the culmination of several years of planning by Church members and hierarchy like Bishop Koehler, specially chosen RLDS “stewards” established a small community at Atherton, Missouri, in an effort to bring forth this kingdom on earth.⁸ As Koehler’s vision indicated, early twentieth-century RLDS members equated their actions with God’s actions. Without their effort, God’s kingdom could not be established on earth. Confident of their ability to perfect their bodies and live in perfect harmony, RLDS members espoused an optimistic community praxis that they believed could resurrect humanity itself. They could not foresee the emotional, financial, and physical losses that they would endure during the Great Depression. For some, such losses would lead to a broader, spiritualized reinterpretation of Zion while others would emphasize the apocalyptic aspects of the kingdom over its socialistic economic vision. In a real sense, the RLDS community faced the problem of “when prophecy fails” during the crisis of modernity itself—a crisis that had long-term consequences on the movement.

In the past fifty years, sociologists of religion have explored how individual religious groups respond to failed prophecy. In a now-foundational 1956 study, *When Prophecy Fails*, Leon Festinger, Henry Riecken, and Stanley Schacter argued that groups often emerge from failed prophecy more committed to their beliefs than before, strengthened by the process of negotiating “cognitive dissonance,” a term they originated.⁹ Festinger, Riecken, and Schacter also claimed that groups would evangelize after failed prophecy, rather than disintegrate. In 1985, J. Gordon

Melton challenged some of Festinger, Riecken, and Schacter's conclusions but significantly nuanced their framework. He demonstrated that groups often spiritualize a failed prophecy and/or reaffirm the faith's basic beliefs and commitments in the wake of failed prediction. In addition, Melton cogently proclaimed that, while outsiders may classify a group solely on the basis of a single predictive event, most millennialist groups are "set within a complex system of beliefs and interpersonal relationships" of which the "failed prophecy" is only one element.¹⁰ In this way, groups with a more complex cosmology generally emerge even stronger from a failed-prophecy episode since the failure "provides a test for the system and for the personal ties previously built within the group." In sum, "times of testing tend to strengthen, not destroy a group."¹¹ Melton concludes that failed prophecy may in fact reinforce group cohesion, but for different reasons than those Festinger, Riecken, and Schacter asserted.

Despite Melton's astute observation that adaptation to failed prophecy springs out of a much broader context than a single isolated aspect of a group's life, most scholars of this issue have failed to give historical context an important place in their theoretical musings.¹² The result is decontextualized sociological models with assumed applicability regardless of whether the failed-prophecy event happened in the nineteenth century, the late twentieth century, or even the first century.¹³ In an attempt to generalize their theories for widest applicability, most authors have failed to observe how the larger culture of nineteenth- or twentieth-century America (where most studies are situated) has helped to generate plausibility structures for expecting prophetic fulfillment. Additionally, scholars have not addressed how larger cultural movements directly impacted the way individuals have adapted to failed prophecy. In other words, sociologists of religion have largely failed to historicize their own models, giving them an "otherworldly" status much like the "failed prophecies" that such sociological theories describe. In this article, I analyze how RLDS people responded to "failed prophecy" in both the localized context of their specific faith and in the general context of America during modernity.

While present-day observers may see the Saints' community-building dreams as hopelessly utopian and naive, such beliefs were anything but strange for the 1930s. Individuals of varied persuasions experimented in communal living and massive collectivized programs throughout the decade. In Canada, ordinary Catholics experimented with the Antigonish movement.¹⁴ Radical Catholic (and ex-communist) Dorothy Day

founded the communally based Catholic Worker movement.¹⁵ Eastern European Jewish immigrants founded the Sunrise Colony near Saginaw, Michigan, while urban New Jersey Jewish garment workers started the Jersey Homesteads, a “triple cooperative community” that combined “agricultural, industrial, and retail cooperatives” in one community.¹⁶ Jersey Homesteads was one of ninety-nine “New Deal New Towns” that collectively received \$109 million of federal assistance from various New Deal agencies.¹⁷ Even the arch-critic of utopian ventures, Reinhold Niebuhr, served on the board of directors of a several-thousand-acre interracial farming cooperative in the Deep South.¹⁸ On the international stage, Soviet premier Josef Stalin pushed for massive collectivized farms as the world watched the progress through propagandistic newsreel footage.¹⁹ RLDS members stood with these disparate others in their dreams of building collectivized communities that would solve world problems and usher in a reign of peace.

The RLDS vision for collectivized utopian communities found expression in the symbol of Zion, which members equated with the kingdom of God on earth. Early twentieth-century RLDS beliefs about Zion were a syncretic amalgamation of nineteenth-century Latter Day Saint millenarian thought, Protestant Social Gospel ideals, and “Muscular Christianity.”²⁰ Always more open to Protestant theology than their LDS cousins, early twentieth-century RLDS leaders liberally borrowed from thinkers as diverse as the Social Gospel theologian Walter Rauschenbusch,²¹ pragmatist philosopher John Dewey,²² radical theologian Harry Ward,²³ sociologist and theologian Charles Elwood,²⁴ the progressive, ecumenical Anglican bishop and future Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple,²⁵ and the eminent American psychologist and advocate of “Muscular Christianity,” G. Stanley Hall.²⁶ To build Zion, RLDS leaders urged their people to become acquainted with such diverse, challenging thinkers.

Paradoxically, RLDS leaders and laity juxtaposed the use of such liberal leaders with the rather conservative sectarian conviction that the then-100,000-member RLDS Church was “the one true Church” and the true heir of Joseph Smith Jr.’s restoration movement. Like their nineteenth-century ancestors, many members felt millennial urgency to build the kingdom on earth through cooperative colonies.²⁷ Similarly, Reorganized Latter Day Saints taught a doctrine of “gathering” to build up this kingdom. Following Joseph Smith Jr.’s revelations from the 1830s, they

believed that the New Jerusalem was to have literal physical place in Independence. In accordance with Smith's nineteenth-century revelations, the RLDS hierarchy relocated Church headquarters to Independence in 1920. Joseph Smith Jr.'s radical egalitarianism also found a place in the RLDS kingdom. In Zion, "every man who has need may be amply supplied and receive according to his wants," revealed the first Mormon Prophet (D&C 42:9b; LDS D&C 42:33). The early twentieth-century RLDS Prophet Frederick Madison Smith liked to sum up the thought of his grandfather, Joseph Smith Jr., with the phrase, "from every man according to his capacity; to every man according to his needs." Of course, he borrowed this felicitous phrase directly from Karl Marx.²⁸

While Joseph Smith, John Dewey, and Karl Marx might seem like strange bedfellows to outsiders, RLDS leaders saw no contradiction in their religious syncretism. "The glory of God is intelligence," Joseph Smith Jr. had declared in a "thus saith the Lord" revelation—and RLDS members believed it, albeit with new, modern minds (D&C 90:6a; LDS 93:36). Historian Mario S. De Pillis argues that this Mormon scriptural passage—"the glory of God is intelligence"—meant "primarily education in millennial doctrine and personal holiness" to early Mormons. Yet "as the Saints accommodated to the secular world, *intelligence* came to mean the cultivation of the mind."²⁹ Early twentieth-century Reorganized Latter Day Saints wholeheartedly pursued such cultivation. Like their LDS cousins, RLDS members pursued paths toward establishing higher educational institutions and advanced degrees from America's best institutions.³⁰

"One's knowledge of Zion," wrote Prophet F. M. Smith, "would be enhanced by knowing as much as possible of the humanities in scientific study: anthropology, to know man as a biological individual; ethnology, to know him as one of a group; psychology, to know his mental traits; sociology, to know the fruitage of social instincts. All this should widen the scope of his knowledge of the Zionite goals."³¹ He took his own counsel to heart, earning an M.A. in sociology in 1911 and a Ph.D. in psychology in 1916.³² Early twentieth-century RLDS members longed for learning and a chance to practice "applied Christianity" advocated by both prophets and liberal Protestant Social Gospel leaders. Armed with a strangely sectarian and proto-ecumenical ideology, RLDS members embraced their perceived duty and destiny to establish communities of cooperation that would usher in the kingdom of God.

By 1929, RLDS members had established a number of “stewardship associations” whose ends were to establish cooperative communities.³³ In tandem with this movement, Church leaders authorized a complicated application process through which members could apply to be part of the envisioned stewardship communities. Church leaders hoped to find the best qualified members to populate these “Zionic” communities—qualified in every sense from their spiritual fitness to their educational levels and their physical capacities for work. In less than a year, more than a thousand members applied. On the pages of their application forms, would-be stewards explained their ardent desire to live within the communities that could possibly initiate the kingdom of God. Church authorities, including Prophet F. M. Smith, carefully screened the applications. In at least one instance, Smith intervened to the point of carrying on an extended correspondence with one applicant’s pastor over the potential steward’s attempts to abandon tobacco. Clearly, Church authorities felt that such an intense level of scrutiny for would-be stewards could aid the success of the envisioned communities. As Church publications broadcast the call for stewards to gather to these envisioned Zionic communities, members felt a heightened sense of urgency.³⁴ Such urgency generated by leaders and laity alike helped inflate expectations beyond what could be realized later.

Still, four such communal entities were formed between 1926 and 1931: in Atherton, Missouri; Onset, Massachusetts;³⁵ Detroit, Michigan;³⁶ and Taney County, Missouri.³⁷ Atherton, the oldest, was the culmination of several years of planning by RLDS officials and laity. In 1926, RLDS Church leaders had bought almost 2,500 acres of land in the Atherton flood plain along the Missouri River, northeast of Independence.³⁸ By 1930, as many as nineteen families occupied small houses in the start-up community. They built a church, farmed, and began a poultry hatchery which, for a time, brought in a profit for the community that was equally divided among all stewards.

Unfortunately for the stewards who occupied the small start-up communities, larger national and denominational disasters swamped the experiments.³⁹ In early 1931, the RLDS hierarchy realized that the Church faced a serious financial crisis. With the construction of its Auditorium, a gigantic copper-domed headquarters conference center in Independence, the RLDS Church had accumulated a debt of \$1,876,000.⁴⁰ To preserve the Church’s financial solvency, leaders had to take drastic mea-

asures. In desperation, F. M. Smith visited the struggling stewardship community at Atherton and informed the stewards of a planned mortgage of the Church-owned land to help in a Church-wide financial retrenchment program. "Well, President Smith, do you know what this means to this project?" asked a steward. "Well, hum, it means the game is up. Well, we're sorry, but the church is in a tight spot and we just have to do it," was the answer.⁴¹ By this point, Atherton stewards had already become seriously divided over issues of leadership and control in the community. With Smith's announcement of the land's mortgage, the formal stewardship community broke apart. Several stewards remained on the Atherton land and, as individuals, rented from the Church while the RLDS Presiding Bishopric sold several cooperative enterprises and parcels of land to outside buyers, some of whom were not RLDS members.⁴²

Despite their hopes of building a religious utopia in the 1930s, RLDS members found themselves in mixed company, as utopian socialists, classical liberals who had invested in the stock market, European communists, and fascists all saw their idealistic projects crumble in the 1930s and 1940s.⁴³ Predictably, RLDS members cited many reasons for the failure. "The land was never free from debt," Bishop Koehler told an interviewer.⁴⁴ "There had been unwise use of spiritual gifts in the past," asserted Atherton Pastor Amos E. Allen, who explained that D. R. Hughes, one of the stewards, had been told in prophecy that he would become a bishop. As a result, Allen believed, Hughes had difficulty cooperating with Church authorities.⁴⁵ Frank E. Ford, one of the stewards, felt that the community had failed due to lack of prophetic insight by those who called the stewards to their tasks. According to another steward, O. C. Hughes, "The causes of the discontinuance were all of a spiritual and intangible nature and . . . none of them were due to financial difficulties."⁴⁶

In contrast, other stewards felt that the community had relied too much on divine intervention. Steward Roy Young stated that "the same attitude was taken by some of these men that was taken in connection with other farm problems, being superficially that they should pray over their problems and that the Lord would rebuke the disease from their flocks the same as he would rebuke the disease from people on administration, and that the Lord would lead them in various endeavors."⁴⁷ As Young and the other stewards found by hard experience, dead chickens did not receive immediate resurrection. Young concluded that the Atherton com-

munity had been “too narrow, too selfish, too clannish, and not inclined to look upon the entire needs of the community.”⁴⁸ It is not difficult to sense disillusionment, even bitterness, on the part of these stewards as their community project ended.

As noted before, Festinger, Riecken, and Schacter and subsequent scholars of failed prophecy predict that when a prophecy fails, “the individual will frequently emerge, not only unshaken but even more convinced of the truth of his beliefs than ever before.”⁴⁹ While Atherton stewards were shaken by their failed experience, each found ways to reaffirm his faith in the “cause of Zion.” “Brother Edgerton said that he was not discouraged with the attempt to build stewardships,” noted Earl Higdon, bishop of Far West Stake, in a report compiled for RLDS leaders in 1940. “He hoped that the time would come when the general church would study and present a program which it could sanction.”⁵⁰ Higdon also reported that steward Roy Young “ha[d] not lost faith in the stewardship idea and believes that some day men and women of the church shall have arrived at the point of broadmindedness and tolerance when they can work together in the establishment of a stewardship community.”⁵¹ Despite the disappointment of former stewards, to a man they felt that the stewardship system could succeed in the future. They took the position that Atherton had been a learning experience for the Church upon which others could build.

Given the context of their time, the stewards at Atherton acted in rational, even culturally understandable ways, motivated by hopes shared by others in the larger society. In the period after the community’s failure, members unanimously reaffirmed their faith in the RLDS Church or at least in its ideals. Despite personal bitterness at individual Church leaders, all stewards reaffirmed their commitment to the “gospel plan of stewardships.” Members of the RLDS Church in general were very disappointed by the failure of the Atherton community, but their faith was also connected to a broader “habitus” of spiritual geography. Zionite beliefs were interwoven through a complicated cosmology rooted in Old and New Testament symbols and reinterpreted by modern RLDS revelations pronounced by Church prophets from Joseph Smith Jr. to their present prophet. While the future coming of Zion provided many with a reason for being, RLDS members also tied in social services, a deep sense of calling, interpersonal bonds, sacred communal rituals, and evangelism as part of their purposes as a people.

In the years that followed the dissolution of the Atherton experiment, RLDS leaders continued to preach the doctrine of Zion, but they never again risked Church tithes on new communities. Instead, individual members attempted grassroots Zionistic experiments that ranged from small-loan organizations to cooperative grocery stores and a small community where members lived together but did not produce anything.⁵² Zion gained middle-class respectability just as those who proclaimed its message entered the ranks of middle-class Americans. In a sense, Zion became less a utopia of production than a utopia built around consumption, mirroring a larger shift in Western perceptions of perfected future communities in the second half of the twentieth century.⁵³

By the 1960s, RLDS members who sought Zion had to contend with a new geographical feature in their Church—the clear emergence of a deepening chasm between fundamentalist and modernist factions. While fundamentalist/modernist debates simmered below the surface of ecclesiastical conflicts in the 1920s, RLDS members held these two worldviews in tension. Yet by the late 1960s, individuals in the RLDS Church had begun to identify themselves as liberals or fundamentalists. Elsewhere, I have argued that this fundamentalist/liberal split was due in part to the difficult American transformation from what sociologist Robert Wuthnow calls “dwelling” spirituality to “seeker” spirituality.⁵⁴ This move was due in part to the larger societal reorganizations in the United States following World War II that caused Americans to “negotiate and live with confusion.” In addition, he argues, people of other faiths were “forced to interact with each other, band together . . . to compromise, and to bargain with other religious groups to get what they want[ed].”⁵⁵ RLDS members, not immune to their environment, were caught in these larger cultural dynamics that helped to generate two different ways of being in their Church. Yet on the localized level, the RLDS collective reckoning with “failed prophecy” also helped generate the fundamentalist-liberal chasm.

While the first generation of RLDS hierarchy never repudiated its commitment to a combined sectarian and Progressive model for Zion, the second generation of RLDS Progressives dropped the sectarian trappings of Zion for an ecumenical model of the kingdom drawn from modernist theology that affirmed “broad responsibility over society” instead of over one centralized geographical area.⁵⁶ Zion in this new conceptualization was to be a leaven in the world rather than a lighthouse.⁵⁷ Several prominent RLDS leaders now even openly admitted that the goal of building a

utopian city was impossible for humans to achieve.⁵⁸ To compensate for this bold admission, Progressives emphasized a realized eschatology that affirmed that Zion was “already” and still “not yet”—a process rather than a goal.⁵⁹ Still, Church progressives emphasized the need to make Zion present through social justice advocacy and “participatory human development projects” in all the world.⁶⁰ Progressives, then, spiritualized the millennialist Zion while still affirming a commitment to concrete social justice issues attached to the Social Gospel Zion.⁶¹

In contrast, fundamentalists reinterpreted Zion in a way that denied the need for any reinterpretation. Church members simply needed to follow God’s eternal word and the kingdom would come, so they claimed. After the collapse of the Atherton community effort by 1931, many former stewards became resentful of hierarchical control by educated “experts” like J. A. Koehler and Frederick Madison Smith. This resentment presaged a revolt against ecclesiastical “experts” by the next generation of Atherton residents who had grown up at Atherton and who heard much rhetoric about their role as the forthcoming seed of the kingdom. Perhaps predictably in the age of Cold War containment (the 1950s to the early 1970s), the children of Atherton stewards lost much of their parents’ Christian socialism but retained their fundamentalist eschatological hopes for the future—which, for some, included the fiery destruction of America in the last days as Zion emerged from the ashes.⁶² Some of these children who stayed in Atherton eventually revolted against attempts by the RLDS hierarchy to force their stake⁶³ to ordain women in the 1980s, sued for the ownership of the Atherton church built by the stewards, and won ownership of the building.⁶⁴ At the time of this essay’s publication, the Atherton Restoration Branch is an independent congregation of more than 300 members who are affiliated with the quasi-fundamentalist Restoration Branches movement drawn from dissident RLDS members.⁶⁵ These fundamentalists, then, adapted to failed prophecy by reaffirming their basic faith commitments even while they waged war with their liberal counterparts over the geography of the body of Zion.

In sum, the failure to build Zion in the 1930s was not simply an issue worked out by one generation of believers but a problem that individuals confronted across generational lines. Additionally, RLDS members struggled with this problem within the context of complex changes in American society across forty years. RLDS members confronted new spiritual languages, new cultural chasms, and new conceptions of the “good

society.” For each rising generation, part of Zion died; yet, RLDS faithful resurrected the corpse in divergent reinterpretations of their collective failed prophecy that, in turn, preserved the integrity of their spiritual cosmos in a changing world.

As contemporary members of the Community of Christ (the former RLDS Church) and Restorationists gathered on Resurrection Sunday, 2007, they did so with very similar ceremonies, but with greatly divergent meanings. Men and women in the Community of Christ served the communion to all baptized Christians in their midst, regardless of denomination, while male Restorationists, like those at Atherton, served the Lord’s Supper only to members baptized by male, non-liberal RLDS/Restorationist priesthood. The disparity in these approaches was more than a simple difference in theology. Instead, these ceremonies manifested disparate embodiments of the RLDS Zion found in the memory of two once-related communities. Bishop Koehler’s predictive vision of a dead and resurrected Jesus remained partly present in both churches as they embraced differing eschatological hopes for a coming future.

Notes

1. Portions of this text are revised and expanded from my thesis, “The Body of Zion: Community, Human Bodies, and Eschatological Futures among the Reorganized Latter Day Saints, 1908–1934” (M.A. thesis, University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2004). I would like to thank the following individuals who read earlier versions of this essay: Gary Ebersole and Andrew Bergerson, both from the Department of History, the University of Missouri-Kansas City; Ralph Keen of the Department of Religious Studies, the University of Iowa; Roger D. Launius of the National Air and Space Museum; Mary Sawyer, the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Iowa State University, and *Dialogue*’s anonymous reviewers.

2. In April 2001, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints officially became the Community of Christ. Unless otherwise noted, this essay retains the historic nomenclature. Koehler was the bishop of Holden Stake, a largely rural stake near Independence that included the Atherton stewardship community described in the text. In the early twentieth-century RLDS Church, bishops served as stake stewardship officers; pastors (or presiding elders) were in charge of congregations, and specially set-apart high priests served as stake presidents.

3. J. A. Koehler, “I Saw Jesus,” photocopy, Joseph Luff Collection in Karl Anderson’s personal library, Independence. My thanks to Anderson for

making this resource available. Koehler's "cross of gold" reference appropriated William Jennings Bryan's famous phrase; however, Koehler apparently referred to a cross of greed that crucified humanity rather than the gold standard.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. See H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1929). For historical overviews of the RLDS Church, see Richard P. Howard, *The Church through the Years*, Vol. 1, *RLDS Beginnings to 1860* (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1993) and *The Church through the Years*, Vol. 2, *The Reorganization Comes of Age, 1860–1992* (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1993); and Paul M. Edwards, *Our Legacy of Faith: A Brief History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1991).

7. Perhaps the best example of this tendency in RLDS thought is J. A. Koehler, *Problems of Industrial Zion* (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1927), with a foreword by RLDS Prophet Frederick Madison Smith. Historian Larry Hunt, *F. M. Smith: Saint as Reformer* (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1982), 387, attempts to classify Smith as part of political "mugwumpery" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries or as "part of the more conservative, traditional side of the larger, many-faceted movement known as progressivism." While Hunt's work is invaluable and his definition has a certain methodological utility, he largely ignores the broader context of the Social Gospel movement and the RLDS appropriation of Social Gospel theology. Since Hunt's study appeared in 1982, historians of the Social Gospel movement have demonstrated that the movement's adherents ranged along the spectrum of beliefs from the far left to the far right. For instance, Ralph Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White: American Racial Reform, 1885–1912* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 6, argues that the Social Gospel movement itself was less a radical movement than "an extension of the antebellum home missions and social reform movements." Luker further asserts that the Social Gospel movement was a largely socially conservative movement reacting to disruptive social changes in American communities. Frederick Madison Smith, then, stood within the mainstream of these somewhat conservative Christian reformers. In addition, while Hunt sees the RLDS movement as out of step with American culture, the Social Gospel movement continued well into the 1940s. See Paul T.

Phillips, *A Kingdom on Earth: Anglo-American Social Christianity, 1880–1940* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

8. In the commemorative *Centennial Yearbook* sold at the 1930 RLDS General Conference, RLDS editors placed a two-page article with glossy photographs of the Atherton community in the very center of the book. *Centennial Yearbook and Conference Souvenir* (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1930), 50–51. A member from the Atherton congregation reported that a group of three hundred Saints attending this conference visited the Atherton community on a single day. “Atherton,” *Saints’ Herald* 77 (May 21, 1930): 570.

9. Leon Festinger, Stanley Schacter, and Henry Riecken, *When Prophecy Fails: A Social Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956).

10. J. Gordon Melton, “Spiritualization and Reaffirmation: What Really Happens When Prophecy Fails,” in *Expecting Armageddon: Essential Readings in Failed Prophecy*, edited by Jon R. Stone (New York: Routledge, 2000), 147.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Stone’s anthology brings together some of the best work on “failed prophecy” in the last fifty years. With the exception of Melton and Lawrence Foster (whose essay on Millerites and Shakers addresses theory only indirectly), most authors in Stone’s collection approach the question of failed prophecy as an all-encompassing question that can be removed from historical context. For a concise overview of recent work on failed prophecy, see Lorne L. Dawson, “When Prophecy Fails and Faith Persists: A Theoretical Overview,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 3, no. 1 (1999): 60–82. Despite the helpful summary of previous studies, Dawson reframes Festinger by referring to “dissonance management” but not to particular historical contexts. A further sociological refinement of Dawson’s theory is Douglas E. Cowan, “Confronting the Failed Failure: Y2K and Evangelical Eschatology in Light of the Passed Millennium,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 7, no. 2 (2003): 71–85. In an essay that appeared at the same time as Dawson’s study, Chris Bader, “When Prophecy Passes Unnoticed: New Perspectives on Failed Prophecy,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38, no. 1 (1999): 119–31, repeats the sociological tendency toward decontextualism by attempting to fit the question of failed prophecy into ahistorical rational choice theory.

13. For application of Festinger’s theory to early Christianity, see John Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 37–49. Bader, “When Proph-

ecy Passes Unnoticed,” 121, 123–24, draws material from mid-nineteenth-century Morrisites and late twentieth-century groups like Heaven’s Gate and the Baha’is Under the Provisions of the Covenant (BUPC).

14. Scott MacAulay, “The Smokestack Leaned toward Capitalism: An Examination of the Middle Way Program of the Antigonish Movement,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 37, no. 1 (2002): 43. In the late 1920s, the Antigonish Movement emerged in maritime Canada as “a program of populist adult education and co-operative development.” The Extension Department of the Catholic St. Francis Xavier University served as the “intellectual and organizational center of the movement in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Movement activists saw themselves as a middle way between capitalism and socialism. Ibid.

15. The classic account of this movement is Mel Piehl, *Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Temple University Press, 1982). Individual Catholic Worker communities are constituted by a small “family” (people not necessarily related by blood) of clergy, nuns, and/or laity. They covenant to serve those on the margins of society through social justice activism and houses of hospitality. For a recent study on the evolution of the Catholic Worker family, see Dan McKanan, “Inventing the Catholic Worker Family,” *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 76, no. 1 (March 2007): 84–113.

16. Francis Shor, “The Utopian Project in a Communal Experiment of the 1930s: The Sunrise Colony in Historical and Comparative Perspective,” *Communal Societies* 7 (1987): 82–94; Sora H. Friedman, “No Place like Home: The Settling of Jersey Homesteads, New Jersey,” *Communal Societies* 19 (1999): 24. Sunrise’s Jewish colonists communally farmed 10,000 acres from 1933 to 1936. Members ate meals in communal dining halls, established a collective home for their children, and governed themselves by a democratic general assembly.

17. Friedman, “The Settling of Jersey Homesteads,” 27; Paul K. Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1959).

18. Richard Wightman Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Biography* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), 176. Niebuhr served on the board of the “Delta Cooperative” located in Hillhouse, Mississippi.

19. Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth-Century Russia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), esp. chap. 9.

20. Howlett, “The Body of Zion,” chap. 1.

21. C. E. Wright, “The Problem of the Ages,” *Saints’ Herald* 67, no. 35 (September 1, 1920): 845.

22. Koehler, *Problems of Industrial Zion*.

23. In a class at the 1944 RLDS General Conference, Bishop Koehler suggested that students read some of Ward's works. See "The Mission of the Church in the Crisis of Civilization," "Koehler, J. A. file," Biographical Folder Collection, Community of Christ Archives.

24. Wright, "Problem of the Ages," 845, and Charles Ellwood, Letter to Frederick Madison Smith, as quoted in *Zion's Ensign* 29 (August 8, 1918): 14.

25. In a private conversation with me, Community of Christ Theologian-in-Residence Anthony Chvala-Smith stated that William Temple's theology in the 1930s greatly influenced both the young RLDS Apostle F. Henry Edwards and the soon-to-be apostle Arthur Oakman. According to Chvala-Smith, Oakman drew portions of his sermons straight from Temple's works, sometimes word for word, not always with citations. Ironically, Oakman and Edwards are still beloved by conservative RLDS members even though both men drew some of their most eloquent theology from the writings of the liberal Archbishop of Canterbury.

26. Hall served as Frederick Madison Smith's dissertation advisor at Clark University and wrote the introduction to Smith's dissertation: Frederick M. Smith, *The Higher Power of Man* (Lamoni, Ia.: Herald Publishing House, 1918), 9–13.

27. In December 1930, an elderly RLDS man wrote to the First Presidency that he was "convinced that the warning given by the Seer [Joseph Smith Jr.] was "nigh at hand." Paraphrasing Joseph Smith's 1831 revelation, the man stated "that the time will come when he who will not take up his sword to fight his neighbor" must flee to Zion for safety (D&C 45:13a; LDS 45:68). The writer balanced his apocalyptic doom with a paradoxical hope "to see saints organized into cooperative colonies. I believe that if I was authorized," continued the man, that "I would find many of our people who would be glad to become one of such a group stewardship." "V-X: Stewardship Applications," P75–4, f44, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence.

28. F. M. Smith, "Zion and Stewardships," *Saints' Herald* 75, no. 10 (March 7, 1928): 276. Hunt, *F. M. Smith*, 135, contended that Smith "unwittingly appropriated a Marxian aphorism he found on the cover of *Cosmopolitan*." However, cultural geographer Richard A. Waugh, "Sacred Space and the Persistence of Identity: The Evolution and Meaning of an American Religious Utopia" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1995), 229, commented: "It seems incredible that Smith could study socialism at the University of Kansas in the course of getting his master's degree and earn a Ph.D.

in psychology at Clark University without recognizing the origin of this famous summary of Marxist thought.”

29. Mario S. De Pillis, “Christ Comes to Jackson County: The Mormon City of Zion and Its Consequences,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 23 (2003): 42.

30. In 1895, RLDS members established Graceland University at Lamoni, Iowa. Both Prophet Frederick Madison Smith and his counselor Floyd McDowell received Ph.D.s from Clark University where they studied with G. Stanley Hall, America’s best-known psychologist of the early twentieth century. Future RLDS Presiding Patriarch Roy Cheville attended seminary at the University of Chicago Divinity School from which he received his Ph.D. Bishop J. A. Koehler, a crucial leader in the RLDS stewardship movement, was awarded both his B.A. and bachelor of divinity from Temple University. Edwards, *History of the Church* 7:709–11; Paul M. Edwards, *The Hilltop Where: An Informal History of Graceland College* (Lamoni, Ia: Venture Foundation, 1972); “Introducing J. August Koehler,” *Saints’ Herald* 98, no. 5 (January 29, 1951): 119.

31. Frederick M. Smith, “Some Things a Member of the Priesthood Should Know,” *The Priesthood Journal* 9, no. 3 (1943): 6.

32. Paul M. Edwards, *The Chief: An Administrative Biography of Fred M. Smith* (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1988), 93, 114.

33. Late nineteenth-century Reorganized Saints experimented in a renewed “Order of Enoch” loosely based on the 1830s Mormon organization of the same name. While this corporation was not legally connected to the RLDS Church, it provided late nineteenth-century members with an avenue by which they could realize “Zion-building” endeavors. The most important accomplishment of the RLDS Order of Enoch was the 1870s establishment of Lamoni, Iowa, as an RLDS community and gathering place. Joseph Smith III saw the Lamoni community as a halting step toward a future, more perfectly realized community of Zion that would some day exist in Independence. Consequently, the Order of Enoch did not renew its charter in 1890. By then, Joseph Smith III and many of the Saints had turned their attention to a future move to Independence. See Roger D. Launius, “The Mormon Quest for a Perfect Society at Lamoni, Iowa, 1870–1890,” *The Annals of Iowa* 47, no. 4 (1984): 325–42. In 1909, members resurrected the RLDS Order of Enoch. Rather than build communities, this organization provided “a trusted means for out-of-town Saints to buy a building lot for a new house in Zion [Independence] during the [early twentieth-century] gathering process.” The Order of Enoch was incorporated into the “Central Development Authority” (CDA) on July 1, 1927. By then, RLDS members had focused their commu-

nity-building efforts into newly formed stewardship associations. See Gregory Smith, "The United Order of Enoch in Independence," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 22 (2002): 116–17.

34. David J. Howlett, "'The Making of a Steward': Zion, Ecclesiastical Power, and RLDS Bodies, 1923–31," *Journal of Mormon History* 32, no. 2 (2006): 25–27, 29–31, 34–37.

35. In Onset, Massachusetts, members of an RLDS stewardship association bought land to be used for summer camping and Church "reunion" experiences. During the rest of the year, several families lived on the land as a small community. "Southern New England Reunion," *Saints' Herald* 76 (August 21, 1929): 1024–25.

36. Stewards at Detroit, Michigan, formed an association and served as a type of financial board of directors for the RLDS Detroit Stake throughout the 1930s. While they directed the construction of a new church, they never formed a community.

37. In Taney County, Missouri, the RLDS Church brought a family of Oregon sheep ranchers to develop a ranch that could provide employment for other RLDS members. "A Church into Sheep Business to Give Members Employment," *Independence Examiner*, July 5, 1929, in "Newspaper Clippings, 1924–1931," microfilm reel #923, Community of Christ Archives.

38. Ronald E. Romig and John Siebert, "J. A. Koehler and the Stewardship Movement at Atherton," *Saints' Heritage: The Journal of the Restoration Trails Foundation* 1 (1988): 46–47.

39. See my "The Making of a Steward," 36–37. Ironically, while the Great Depression ended RLDS communal experiments, the economic catastrophe encouraged other groups to actively pursue communal solutions to world problems. See Donald W. Whisenhunt, "Utopias, Communalism, and the Great Depression," *Communal Societies* 3 (1983): 102.

40. Hunt, *F. M. Smith* 2:368.

41. J. A. Koehler, "Seminar on Zion," 1957, Independence, typescript of address, in "Koehler, J. A., File," Biographical Folder Collection, Community of Christ Archives.

42. Hunt, *F. M. Smith*, 1:197.

43. For an example of a communist experience of "failed prophecy," see Arthur Koestler, "The God that Failed," in John W. Boyer and Julius Kirshner, eds., *Twentieth-Century Europe*, Vol. 9 of *Readings in Western Civilization*, edited by John Boyer and Jan Goldstein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 352–67.

44. Earl T. Higdon, "The History of the Atherton Stewardship Experi-

ment," photocopy (Independence, Mo.: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1940), 52.

45. Ibid., 54–55.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., 70.

48. Ibid., 71.

49. Festinger, *When Prophecy Fails*, 3.

50. Higdon, "History of the Atherton Stewardship," 73.

51. Ibid., 71.

52. For a survey of these efforts by 1979, see Sandra Colyer, "Zion-ic/Stewardship Endeavors: Prepared for the Zion-ic Community Commission, Thomas Noffsinger, Commissioner," Private Report, 1979–80, Community of Christ Archives. The most significant of these efforts is Harvest Hills, a Community of Christ/RLDS intentional community on the outskirts of Independence. Begun in 1972, Harvest Hills continues to function, although members do not jointly engage in cooperative occupational enterprises. For a brief history of Harvest Hills, see James A. Christianson, *Zion in Our Time* (Independence, Mo.: Center for Zion-ic Studies, 1980).

53. Hieko Stoff discusses this shift in Western utopic concepts in his "Utopian Thinking between Producerism and Consumerism: What Distinguishes the New Deal from the *Volksgemeinschaft*!," in *Visions of the Future in Germany and America*, edited by Norbert Finzsch and Hermann Wellenreuther (New York: Berg, 2001), 446.

54. David J. Howlett, "Remembering Polygamy: The RLDS Church and American Spiritual Transformations in the Late Twentieth Century," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 24 (2004): 149–72.

55. Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 198.

56. Paul A. Wellington, ed., *Readings on the Concepts of Zion* (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1973), 33.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., 31, 35, 121.

59. Ibid., 30–35, 114–23, 132.

60. Outreach International, the RLDS Church's humanitarian charity, developed a "participatory human development" program in the 1970s. In this program, people in developing areas (who were not necessarily RLDS members) would participate in an outreach-funded project, such as building a school or digging a well for clean water. Thus, people in developing areas maintained a measure of "ownership" over their projects. Apostle Charles Neff, an important revisionist of the RLDS Zion, helped found Outreach In-

ternational. Matthew Bolton, *Apostle of the Poor: The Life and Works of Missionary and Humanitarian Charles D. Neff* (Independence, Mo.: John Whitmer Books, 2005), 111–14.

61. For further examples, see Andrew Bolton, “‘Blessed Are . . .’: Developing a Christ-Centered Theology of Peace, Justice, and Sustainable Environment,” *Saints’ Herald* 145 (October 1998): 412–13; Anthony Chvala-Smith, “The Spirit, the Book, and the City: Retrieving the Distinctive Voice of the Restoration,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 19 (1999): 26–27; Stephen M. Veazey, “2005 World Conference Sermon: ‘Share the Peace of Jesus Christ,’” April 2005, www.cofchrist.org/docs/wc2005/Veazey-sermon.asp (accessed March 21, 2007).

62. Such an apocalyptic prediction keeps faith with earlier generations of Reorganized Latter Day Saints who also believed that America would be “cleansed” in the last days while Zion came into being. For instance, at the same conference in which Bishop Koehler predicted that a Social Gospel Lord would be resurrected through Zion, R. E. Burgess uttered an inspired poem that read in part as follows:

I have spoken through my prophets
Telling of the days to come
When my judgments will be poured out
Without measure; fail shall none
Pestilence and also famine
Wind and rain my wrath shall show
Lightning and the awful thunder
Spread destruction here below.
I’ve set for you a task, my people
Before you stands an open door
Enter ye the task to accomplish
Zion beckons; haste ye more.

In this conceptualization, Zion acts as an ark, saving Saints from the coming destruction. See Alvin Knisley, *Infallible Proofs* (1930; rpt., Independence, Mo.: Price Publishing Company, 1988), 181–82. Knisley’s work collects dreams from RLDS members, some of which, like the one quoted above, were printed in the *Saints’ Herald*. Significantly, many Restorationists still use Knisley’s book as a source for spiritual insight into the future.

63. Like LDS stakes, RLDS stakes were diocese-like administrative units made up of multiple congregations; but since April 2002, the Community of Christ has been organized into “mission centers” which approximate and

consolidate older stake divisions. Members of the Restoration Branch movement have not organized any official geographical administrative units beyond one organization for pastors around Independence, a decentralized Conference of Restoration Elders which has no powers of enforcing its legislation, and a Joint Conference of Restoration Branches whose scope and authority are just emerging at this time.

64. The internecine conflict between fundamentalist RLDS and the liberal RLDS hierarchy has been documented in a pamphlet published by fundamentalist RLDS elder Richard Price in *Blue Valley Packet* (Independence, Mo.: Price Publishing Company, n.d. [1998]). In it, Price reproduces local newspaper articles, letters from the RLDS hierarchy, and his own polemical commentary. Price distributes this pamphlet free at his Independence bookstore. RLDS Church historian Richard Howard provides a different perspective on this conflict in *The Church through the Years*, 2:409–32.

65. Much of the information for this paragraph is taken from my personal observations as both a scholar and a participant who grew up in this movement. Additionally, I have many friends who attend the Atherton Restoration Branch. While I classify “Restorationists” as dissident RLDS members for heuristic purposes in this essay, several Restorationists whom I know deeply resent the appellation. Like many groups involved in religious schisms, Restorationists see themselves as bearers of the true tradition, not as dissidents.



Allan West; *Four Seasons*; gold leaf, silver leaf, quartz, coral, mica, natural mineral pigments, deer bone glue binder; on Japanese mulberry paper; 120 cm x 330 cm; commissioned by the I. family



Allan West; *Harbinger*; silkscreen ink, aluminum powder; hand-pulled silkscreen print; edition of 40; on Japanese mulberry paper; 50 cm x 25 cm

Latter-day Saints under Siege: The Unique Experience of Nicaraguan Mormons

Henri Gooren

LDS Growth in Latin America

The LDS Church is currently gaining many new members in Asia, Africa, and especially Latin America. Nowadays more than 35 percent of the worldwide membership is concentrated in Latin America, compared to about 45 percent in the United States and Canada. By 2020, the majority of Mormons in the world will be Latin Americans, if the current growth rates continue.¹ Judging from current LDS growth rates, the future Mormon heartland will be the Andes and Central America, instead of the Wasatch Front. Rodney Stark is exaggerating, however, when he labels Mormonism the next world religion,² since he ignores a drop-out rate for converts that generally exceeds 50 percent.³ One year after joining the LDS Church, only about half of the new converts remain active, meaning that they attend Church services at least once a month.

Latin America contains more than one-third of the worldwide LDS membership, but the members are not equally divided among the nineteen countries. (See Table 1). Numerically, the Mormon Church in Latin America is currently strongest in Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia, Honduras (and Central America as a whole), Peru, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic. In all of these countries, between 1 and 3 percent of the population have been baptized into the LDS Church. Active Mormons, who go to Church at least once a month, make up at best about half of the baptized members. Core members, those who pay their tithing and follow the LDS code of conduct, usually form about half of the active members.⁴

TABLE 1
LDS MEMBERSHIP IN LATIN AMERICA AT YEAR-END 2005

<i>Country (Year of Arrival)</i>	<i>Membership</i>	<i>% population</i>	<i>AAGR 2004-05</i>	<i>2003-04</i>
Chile (1956)	539,193	3.3	0.83%	0.76%
Uruguay (1948)	86,943	2.55	2.31%	2.17%
Bolivia (1964)	148,630	1.69	3.32%	4.38%
Honduras (1952)	116,416	1.67	3.19%	3.10%
Peru (1956)	416,060	1.49	3.44%	4.57%
El Salvador (1948)	94,296	1.41	2.52%	1.73%
Guatemala (1947)	200,537	1.37	1.91%	2.38%
Panama (1941)	40,897	1.35	1.34%	1.56%
Ecuador (1965)	170,736	1.28	3.12%	2.58%
Dominican Republic (1978)	98,268	1.10	5.21%	5.99%
Mexico (1876)	1,043,718	0.98	3.03%	3.37%
Paraguay (1939)	61,308	0.97	5.60%	4.02%
Nicaragua (1953)	52,184	0.95	8.96%	8.59%
Argentina (1925)3	48,396	0.88	2.49%	2.90%
Costa Rica (1946)	34,036	0.85	1.63%	2.13%
Venezuela (1966)	134,597	0.53	4.44%	5.62%
Brazil (1928)	928,926	0.50	3.55%	3.47%
Puerto Rico (1964)	19,746	0.50	-4.53%	-8.25%
Colombia (1966)	149,973	0.35	2.51%	2.32%
Total Latin America	4,684,860	1.25	2.92%	3.06%
Total Central America	538,366	1.27	2.88%	2.16%

AAGR: average annual growth rate in percentage

Source: Deseret Morning News, 2007 *Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Morning News, 2006).

To assess in which countries the Mormon Church is growing, a look at the recent average annual growth rates (AAGR) is necessary. (See Table 1.) Membership growth currently seems to be stagnating (at best 2 to 3 percent a year) in almost all Central American countries but Nicaragua, including Guatemala and Costa Rica (they experienced strong growth in the 1980s), and in Chile, Uruguay, Colombia, and Puerto Rico.⁵ To explain this stagnation would require a separate country-by-country analysis, which is not feasible here. In Puerto Rico, for instance, immigration to the United States is probably an important factor. Moreover, most people who were open to experimenting with Mormonism have probably done so by now in many of these countries.

However, the situation in other Latin American countries is radically different. Based on the average annual growth rates for 2003–04 and 2004–05 in Table 1, the LDS Church is currently experiencing its strongest membership increases in Brazil, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Paraguay, and especially Nicaragua, which is all the more reason to take an in-depth look at the distinctive experience of Mormons in Nicaragua.

The main thesis of this article is that Mormon growth in Nicaragua is directly influenced by the country's turbulent political context. But how did historical and political developments affect LDS growth? To address this question, I first give an overview of my data and methods. A short introduction to Nicaragua is followed by information on the various churches in Nicaragua. Subsequent sections deal with the early history of the LDS Church, the occupation of LDS Church buildings, the underground LDS Church in the Sandinista era (1982–90), the reestablishment of the LDS Church in 1991, and the LDS growth explosion in the 1990s. I conclude with a short summary and some tentative projections.

Data and Methods

The principal source of information here is my fieldwork in Managua, Nicaragua, in 2005 and 2006. I studied competition for members among the Catholic Church (especially the Catholic Charismatic Renewal or CCR), various Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches, and the Mormon Church. I engaged in participant observation in these churches in two low-income neighborhoods: *barrio* Monseñor Lezcano in west Managua and *barrio* Bello Horizonte in the east. I also interviewed various Church leaders, members, and missionaries, and conducted a literature study.

My research project is part of an international program, which is studying global Pentecostalism on four continents.⁶ Its central concepts are interreligious competition, religious markets, conversion careers, and the culture politics of churches. All research projects use standardized checklists for the interviews and participant observations. This “conversion careers” approach includes a typology, which distinguishes five levels of religious participation: disaffiliation, pre-affiliation, affiliation, conversion, and confession. In all four continents, interviews are conducted with members corresponding to each of these five categories.⁷

My findings here all come from the Lezcano Ward, which shared the building with the Las Palmas Ward, whose members came from another poor neighborhood in west Managua. The Lezcano Ward officially had 260 members in 2005, but only about 120 of these were active (46 percent). The bishop reported that church attendance on Sunday was generally about 120, but I usually counted 60 to 80 people. On February 6, 2005, for instance, there were 58 people, about two-thirds of whom were women and girls.

The Lezcano Ward was served by two pairs of missionaries, each pair consisting of one North American and one Latin American missionary. The North Americans were almost all from Utah, Idaho, or California. The Latinos came overwhelmingly from other Central American countries like Costa Rica, Honduras, and Guatemala. The missionaries were aware that Church growth in Nicaragua was strong at the time: Most could expect to baptize at least ten people during their two-year missions. But the missionaries generally knew next to nothing about the country and its tragic history.

An Introduction to Nicaragua

Nicaragua has more than 5.5 million inhabitants and is the largest in physical size of the Central American republics.⁸ The country’s major problems are political instability, bad governance, state corruption, an extremely skewed income distribution (severe inequality), and especially massive and extreme poverty: 78 percent of the Nicaraguan population lives on less than US\$2 a day.⁹ One terrible consequence is that one-fifth of all children under age five are undernourished.¹⁰ According to official statistics, about one-third of Nicaraguans are illiterate.¹¹

How did this situation develop in Nicaragua? The key factors are corrupt elites and foreign interventions. The U.S. Marines intervened in Nic-

aragua almost continuously between 1909 and 1933. President Franklin D. Roosevelt avoided direct military intervention and influenced Nicaraguan politics through the commander of the newly trained National Guard, Anastasio Somoza García (1896–1956).¹² Somoza assassinated guerrilla leader Augusto Sandino in 1933 and became president in 1936. The Somoza dynasty soon dominated not only politics, but also the economy. It ruled Nicaragua as its private plantation and ruthlessly repressed all opposition.

These circumstances led to the founding in 1961 of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN: *Frente Sandinista de la Liberación Nacional*). Somoza's appropriation of most of the international aid after the December 1972 Managua earthquake caused national and international outrage. Somoza stepped up the repression, resulting in more popularity and support for the FSLN—even among the middle classes. Somoza's old alliance with the conservative Catholic Church was weakening under the new Archbishop, Obando y Bravo. The FSLN intensified its revolutionary activities and finally defeated the National Guard on July 19, 1979. The Sandinista Revolution was complete, and Somoza and his family fled.

Nicaragua was in ruins in 1979. More than 50,000 people were dead, and more than 150,000 lived in exile. Many Sandinista leaders called themselves *comandantes* (commanders) and enthusiastically started working on a new society.¹³ The FSLN soon founded the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS), which organized people at neighborhood level but also reported on “anti-revolutionary activities.” However, the FSLN was made up of many factions: Marxists, Maoists, social-democrats, Catholic and Protestant progressives (mostly liberation theologians and base community members), and middle-class liberals. The FSLN enjoyed huge support from progressives in western Europe and the United States but faced increasing opposition from the new Reagan administration.

The Reagan administration organized and supported the *Contras*: counter-revolutionary guerrillas, who were sometimes ex-National Guardsmen. In March 1982, the Contras blew up several bridges and launched violent attacks on peasants, literacy brigades, and the Sandinista People's Army. Reagan also imposed an economic boycott and ordered the mining of several Nicaraguan harbors. The economic boycott decimated exports, forced increasing dependence on Cuba and the East Bloc, and led to hyperinflation in the mid-1980s. The FSLN government re-

instituted compulsory military service in 1983. War and hyperinflation made life harsh.¹⁴

The war, poverty, hyperinflation, and especially the compulsory military service led to the surprise victory of Doña Violeta Barrios de Chamorro in the November 1990 elections. She was the wife of Joaquín Chamorro, former opposition leader and owner of the *La Prensa* newspaper, who had been murdered in 1978 at Somoza's orders. Although without political experience, Doña Violeta seemed the best person to achieve national reconciliation and end the war through improved relationships with the United States. Her government was followed by two neo-liberal governments. President Arnaldo Alemán (1996–2002) was sentenced to jail in 2003 over corruption charges involving millions of dollars. His successor, neo-liberal president Enrique Bolaños served a shortened term (2002–06). Then Daniel Ortega, still firmly in control of the FSLN, won a surprise victory in the January 2007 elections. The government is currently dealing with heavy pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) because of its huge external debt: more than US\$4 billion in 2005.

The Churches in Nicaragua

In the 1980s, the relationship between the FSLN and the Catholic Church hierarchy gradually became tenser. The Bishops' Conference became increasingly critical of the FSLN government in its 1981–83 pastoral letters. Priests with government functions, like the Cardenal brothers, were threatened by the hierarchy with sanctions and often expelled from their Church offices. The conflict was essentially a political power struggle over control of Catholic believers. On the one side, progressive Catholics (base communities, left-wing intellectuals, priests, friars, and lay leaders) sympathized with the FSLN and wanted to help it in their fight for a more just society. On the other side, the conservative Church hierarchy wanted to control its progressive priests and keep them subject to Church authority. They were driven by a deep distrust of the Sandinistas' left-wing ideas and by the hierarchy's traditional alliances with the middle and upper classes. Above all, the hierarchy wanted to avoid divisions within the Catholic Church. With the support of the new pope, John Paul II, they gradually but successfully started to marginalize sympathizers of the Sandinistas within the Roman Catholic Church. Their method of disciplining priests and expelling lay leaders was effective, but at the cost of

TABLE 2
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE NICARAGUAN POPULATION, 1900–2000

	1900	1950	1963	1970	1980	1990	1995	1999	2000
Roman Catholics	94.6	95.9	96.0	95.5	90.7	85.6	85.6	73.0	75.9
Protestants, evangelicals	1.2	4.0	3.8	5.6	8.4	11.4	11.5	16.5	18.8
Non-religious	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.1		-13.7			
Mormons, Witnesses	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	1.2	1.3	8.4	9.1
Islam, Amerindian, Judaism, Spiritist	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.8	0.6	1.8	1.6	2.1	1.4
Doubly affiliated								-5.2	

Adapted from Gooren, "The Religious Market in Nicaragua," 340. *Principal sources*: David B. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1982), 522; David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2d ed. (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2001), 544; Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, *Operation World* (Carlisle, England: Pasternoster Publishing, 2001), 483.

what they wanted to avoid: increasing divisions within the Catholic Church.

Cooling relationships with the Catholic Church caused the FSLN to seek legitimacy with the progressive sector of Protestantism. The Protestant organization CEPAD¹⁵ had been organized after the 1972 earthquake and become involved with the Sandinista governments. The more conservative Protestant sectors, represented especially by Pentecostal leaders, founded new organizations like CNPEN¹⁶ in 1981 and the Evangelical Alliance in 1990. Pentecostal churches in Nicaragua seen strong growth during the anomie of the 1980s.¹⁷

Catholicism was Nicaragua's official religion until the constitutional reforms of 1894 and 1907, which introduced full freedom of religious exercise. In 1963, no less than 96 percent of the population considered itself Roman Catholic. In 2000, however, the percentage decreased remarkably, to almost 76 percent. (See Table 2.) During the same period, the percentage of Protestants went correspondingly, from 4 to almost 19 percent. There are currently approximately 3.85 million Roman Catholics in Nicaragua, an estimated 1 million Protestants, and more than 50,000 Latter-day Saints.

A Short History of the LDS Church in Nicaragua

The first two missionaries of the LDS Church arrived in Nicaragua in 1953, less than one year after the founding of the Central America Mission in Guatemala City on November 16, 1952.¹⁸ The LDS Church was already present in neighboring Costa Rica since 1946 and in Honduras since 1952. Like elsewhere in Central America, growth in Nicaragua was slow in the first decade. The first Nicaraguan was baptized on April 11, 1954. The Nicaragua District of the Central America Mission was organized in 1959.¹⁹

The 1950s and 1960s were characterized by local Church-building—by the foundation and consolidation of branches and wards. The Church always made an effort to maintain smooth relations with the Somoza family to ensure the freedom to proselytize. The oldest LDS Church buildings in Managua, dating from the mid-1960s, include the Lezcano Ward meetinghouse and the meetinghouse in the east Managua *barrio* Bello Horizonte. Nicaragua now has two missions, but (as yet) no LDS temple. Members have been going to the Guatemala City Temple since 1984.²⁰

Church growth remained slow in Nicaragua for a long time. (See Table 3.) By the end of 1979, right after the Sandinista Revolution, there were 3,346 Mormon members. One year later, membership dropped by almost 30 percent, resulting in 2,406 members by the end of 1980. Throughout the 1980s, membership statistics fluctuated significantly. To explain why this happened, a closer look at the Sandinista decade is necessary.

The Occupation of LDS Church Buildings, 1982–90

David Stoll, a U.S. anthropologist, describes in detail the confiscation of various non-Catholic Church buildings by Sandinista activists in 1982.²¹ I will compare Stoll's information to two interviews I conducted with Mormon informants who had direct experience in the events of that era.

Stoll places the occupations against the background of the participation of "two dozen Moravian pastors" in the military rebellion of Miskito Indians against the FSLN government in the Caribbean coastal provinces. On March 3 and 5, the Sandinista newspaper *Barricada* published articles denouncing "The Invasion of the Sects." Later in March 1982, the Contras blew up two bridges in the north and the Contra war started.

Without providing evidence to support his claim, FSLN *comandante* Luis Carrión declared on July 16, 1982: "An enormous quantity of ex-National Guardsmen are now evangelical pastors." *Comandante* Tomás Borge denounced Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Seventh-day Adventists for allegedly receiving funds from the CIA. "As Sandinista rhetoric escalated, churches were vandalized and their members threatened by mobs."²² On July 22, *Barricada* reported that Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS) had occupied three buildings belonging to the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of God, and the Assemblies of God in the low-income neighborhood Ciudad Sandino. After mediation from CEPAD, the Protestant organization sympathetic to the FSLN, these buildings were returned within a few days.

But on August 9, 1982, Sandinista Defense Committees seized more than twenty Adventist, Mormon, and Jehovah's Witness buildings in various Managua neighborhoods. The FSLN leadership claimed that these seizures were spontaneous reactions by the people to the "theological backwardness of the groups in question. But the truth seems to have been otherwise," comments Stoll. "CDS barrio chiefs and neighbors,

some of them embarrassed by the seizures, told evangelicals that the order had come from above, apparently CDS commander Leticia Herrera, who worked next to one of the choicest buildings seized.”²³

The occupation was also an anti-American reaction to the increasing hostility of the Reagan administration toward the Sandinistas. In line with Borge’s accusations, Adventists, Witnesses, and Mormons were singled out as American churches with CIA connections. During these months, some North American missionaries were harassed by mobs in downtown Managua. Brian Hiltscher, a returned LDS missionary, told this story to a U.S. newspaper: “We saw a large banner off in the distance on the front of a cathedral, with the letters of the major revolutionary group in bold red. Soon a mob of 50 appeared, and they began to walk towards us. With bottles and rocks in hand they began to chant, ‘Death to the Yankees.’ Their yelling was directed right at us, but all we could do was walk through them. I guess you can say that missionaries have an undying faith. The Lord is just with you all the time. We went home that day without a scratch on our bodies.”²⁴

The pro-Sandinista Protestant organization CEPAD noted that even the FSLN leadership had a hard time distinguishing between non-Catholic groups that supported the revolution and those that did not. “Three of the six Mormon churches seized were returned that same year, plus a fourth much later.”²⁵ The two remaining buildings were returned after the Sandinistas lost power to President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro in 1991. One of these was the meetinghouse of the Lezcano and Las Palmas wards that I studied in *barrio* Las Palmas, west Managua.

I will compare Stoll’s data to the stories of two well-informed Nicaraguan informants, Daniel and Gabriela,²⁶ who are both ex-Sandinistas. Gabriela (age fifty-four) goes to church in the *barrio* Batahola Norte, where she lives. In 2005, she was president of the Family History Center of the Lezcano Nicaragua Stake. The center had four large microfilm machines, two smaller ones, and two computers with an internet connection. However, Nicaragua is the only country in Latin America where the Roman Catholic Church has not yet permitted the Mormon Church to put birth and marriage records on microfilm.

Gabriela’s parents were among the first Nicaraguans to join the Mormon Church in 1954. She was baptized at age ten in 1961. In the 1970s, she became a militant in the FSLN. After the revolution, she visited France, Hungary, East Germany, and West Germany as president of a

Sandinista youth organization. She never had any problems with the higher FSLN leaders over her membership in the Mormon Church. They were always very tolerant, she said. The problems began, however, when she started working with the lower FSLN ranks. She became disillusioned and left the FSLN in 1987. Gabriela mentions that many other disillusioned Sandinistas joined the Mormon Church after 1990: politicians, group leaders, the military, etc. Contradicting Stoll and Daniel (below), she says that the Lezcano meetinghouse was only briefly occupied in the early 1980s. According to Gabriela, this action was taken because some local FSLN leaders were badly informed, but the situation was quickly sorted out.

Daniel was bishop of the Lezcano Ward for eight years, which is not uncommon in Central America.²⁷ Born in mountainous Estelí on May 8, 1961, he joined the LDS Church in 1988 at age twenty-six. At that time, he was working in Managua as a taxi driver by day and studying at night at the university. He grew up in a family that was “neither poor nor rich.” When he was a child, various relatives took him to visit their churches: Catholic, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Pentecostal. He didn’t like any of them, seeing much hypocrisy. At nine, he didn’t want to go to any church any more. He occasionally got into fights at school and on the streets.

By the time he was twelve, he became even more rebellious. He ran away from his Estelí home after he was “brainwashed” at school by FSLN instructors talking about “the oppression of the people” by Somoza’s brutal dictatorship and was a Sandinista guerrilla fighter for many years. Various times he barely escaped death when farmers would tell him to leave their house because the *Guardia Nacional* was coming. Many times bullets passed close to him. He was caught by Somoza’s National Guard and beaten, though not tortured, but his father managed to obtain his release. Afterward he was religious and a Christian, though still not a member of any church. The first time the Mormon missionaries came knocking at his door, he sent them away angrily. But the second time his heart had changed entirely. He received all the discussions (*charlas*) and soon got baptized.

Daniel was already completely disillusioned with the Sandinistas around 1985, when he saw that they were beginning to break their promises of democracy and freedom. They became corrupt and reinstated compulsory military service during the Contra war. FSLN militants also occupied LDS Church buildings. The LDS building in San Judás, a very poor

neighborhood in the south of Managua, was vandalized and damaged so seriously it had to be demolished and rebuilt. The Lezcano Ward meeting-house became a military base for the Sandinista People's Army (*Ejército Popular Sandinista*). The buildings were returned only after the elections of 1990, badly damaged and stripped of furniture. The fierce persecution of the LDS Church by the Sandinista government proved to him that it was the only true Church. Only the true Church would be the target of such aggressive state persecution. Just like the LDS missionary who confronted an angry mob (see above), Daniel placed the persecution firmly within a religious framework.

Gabriela's memory seemed more selective than Daniel's, who corroborated Stoll's data. Gabriela hinted at divisions in the FSLN: The leaders were more tolerant of religious diversity than the lower ranks. She also mentioned that many Sandinista leaders eventually became Mormons in the 1990s. Daniel illustrated another process: State persecution may lead to increased commitment among the persecuted religious minority. This is essentially what happened when the LDS Church in Nicaragua went underground for almost ten years.

The Underground LDS Church, 1982–90

The Mormon missionaries, mostly of North American origin, were all withdrawn from Nicaragua in 1982, but Latin American missionaries were almost always present, according to Daniel. During all this turmoil, the number of registered Mormon members decreased from 3,270 in 1983 to 3,124 in 1985 and to an absolute low of 2,326 by 1989. (See Table 3.) This means that, between 1982 and 1989, 29 percent of all baptized Mormons in Nicaragua officially left the Church or were dropped from membership. From August 1982 until January 1991, the Mormon Church in Nicaragua effectively functioned underground. The Church decided to change its four wards into branches, making a total of thirteen branches.²⁸ Since there is no literature on this period, I rely on Daniel, the former Lezcano Ward bishop.

This is what Daniel told me: "We met in secret in the homes of some members. These were called the *núcleos* (core, center). We always met in the house of members. It was very hard at this time, but the Church went ahead, because it's the Church of the Lord. . . . We didn't meet very often. There weren't many of us." He remembers that there were so few Melchizedek Priesthood holders left in the Church that the missionaries

TABLE 3
LDS MEMBERSHIP IN NICARAGUA, 1953–2005 AT YEAR ENDS

<i>Year-end 1953–65</i>	<i>Membership n.a.</i>	<i>% Population n.a.</i>	<i>Average annual growth (%) n.a.</i>
1966	913	0.06%	3.0%
1967	940	0.06%	8.0%
1968	1,016	0.06%	5.0%
1969	1,065	0.06%	15.5%
1970	1,230	0.07%	14.5%
1971	1,407	0.07%	6.5%
1972	1,499	0.08%	16.0%
1973	1,741	0.09%	6.0%
1974	1,851	0.09%	–11.0%
1975	1,647	0.08%	47.5%
1976	2,431	0.11%	7.0%
1977	2,606	0.11%	22.0%
1978	3,185	0.13%	5.0%
1979	3,346	0.14%	–28.0%
1980	2,406	0.09%	28.5%
1981	3,094	0.11%	5.0%
1982	3,251	0.11%	0.5%
1983	3,270	0.11%	–13.0%
1984	2,834	0.09%	10.0%
1985	3,124	0.10%	14.0%
1986	3,572	0.11%	9.0%
1987	3,904	0.11%	–35.0%
1988	2,541	0.07%	–8.5%
1989	2,326	0.06%	270.0%
1990	8,596	0.22%	25.0%
1991	10,728	0.27%	13.0%
1992	12,131	0.31%	9.0%
1993	13,215	0.33%	16.0%
1994	15,348	0.36%	19.0%
1995	18,247	0.42%	18.0%
1996	21,505	0.51%	17.0%
1997	25,213	0.55%	9.0%
1998	27,480	0.61%	15.5%
1999	31,747	0.75%	10.0%
2000	34,791	0.76%	8.0%
2001	37,483	0.78%	10.0%
2002	41,224	0.80%	7.0%
2003	44,105	0.82%	8.5%
2004	47,895	0.88%	9.0%
2005	52,184	0.95%	n.a.

n.a. = not available

Sources: Management Information Center, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2006; Deseret Morning News, 2007 *Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Morning News, 2006); Jan Lahmeyer, *Nicaragua: Historical Demographical Data of the Whole Country* <http://www.library.uu.nl/wesp/populstat/Americas/nicaragc.htm> (accessed July 4, 2006).

had to perform blessings and preside over the underground *núcleo* meetings in members' houses until the late 1980s. Daniel often accompanied them, because their dress code and their appearance in pairs made them very conspicuous in the poor neighborhoods of Managua. He had to take them to the members' homes, too, because the missionaries invariably had trouble finding the locations.²⁹

Between 1982 and 1990, most members were afraid to tell co-workers or relatives that they were Mormons. Mormons in Nicaragua were effectively under siege from their own government. In the process, only the most committed core members remained. All the other members, active and inactive, put their LDS identity on hold or took on membership in another church. It was only after President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro came to power in January 1991, after surprisingly winning the November 1990 elections, that state harassment of the Mormon Church in Nicaragua ended and the North American missionaries could return.

Reestablishment of the LDS Church

After Doña Violeta was sworn in as president in January 1991, there was a huge reshuffling of government and bureaucracy positions at all levels of the state. The Chamorro government (1991–96) started a new era of church-state relations, particularly with regard to the Roman Catholic Church. Doña Violeta was an active Catholic, and several of her ministers were orthodox Catholics with ties to Opus Dei.³⁰ The Catholic Church received various favors and state subsidies.

The persecution and isolation of the Mormon Church came to an immediate end in January 1991. The LDS Church was reestablished officially. Its members and missionaries were free to proselytize again, as they had been before 1979 during the Somoza regime. The first North American missionaries were reassigned to Nicaragua in mid-1991 and all meetinghouses were returned to the LDS Church. Many had been sacked, vandalized, and damaged. One or two had to be rebuilt entirely; all others had to be remodeled.

Daniel mentions that the meetinghouse in which the Lezcano and Las Palmas wards met, originally constructed in 1965, was remodeled in a matter of days around 1992. A second and much more comprehensive remodeling took place in 2002. All floors, walls, and roofs were changed, and everything was painted anew. The building now looks brand new and is well-maintained. The same goes for the basketball court. Neighborhood

TABLE 4
ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR LDS CHURCH
GROWTH IN NICARAGUA

	<i>Internal Factors</i>	<i>External Factors</i>
<i>Religious Factors</i>	Appeal of the doctrine	Dissatisfaction with Catholic Church
	Missionary activities	Competition with Protestants/Catholics
<i>Non-religious Factors</i>	Appeal of organization	Economic, social, political anomie
	Natural growth/retention	Urbanization process

youngsters are welcome to come and play basketball with their Mormon friends. Youngsters use the court almost every night.

Daniel remembers that people in the poor Las Palmas and Lezcano neighborhoods remained very hostile to Mormons for a long time in the 1990s when he was bishop. They regularly threw stones through the meetinghouse windows. Thieves from a nearby slum often broke in and stole things. Relationships with the neighborhood dwellers improved only after the LDS Church became involved in relief efforts after hurricanes Joan (1988) and especially Mitch (1998). Since then, relationships with the municipality of Managua and with the national government have also been excellent. LDS buildings are often used for organizing big neighborhood meetings. The current positive image of Mormons is reflected in the growth explosion the Church has experienced since 1990.

A Belated LDS Growth Explosion, 1990–Present

Four main LDS growth periods can be distinguished in Nicaragua since 1953. (See Table 3.)

1. 1953–65: no membership data available
2. 1966–80: strongly fluctuating growth, AAGR between -28 and +48 percent
3. 1981–89: decrease, AAGR generally around -3 percent (between -35 and +14 percent)

4. 1990–present: high growth, AAGR generally around 13 percent (between 7 and 25 percent).

I will analyze the chronology of LDS growth in Nicaragua according to the internal and external factors outlined in Table 4, taking into account both religious and nonreligious elements.³¹

Unfortunately, no membership data are available for 1953–65, except those for the entire Central America Mission, which included Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. Combined membership in these five countries went from 367 in 1953 to 9,873 in 1965. Costa Rica, Honduras, and Nicaragua together had 4,272 members in 1965.

During the second period, 1966–80, LDS growth fluctuated strongly. The main growth factor was nonreligious and external: social, political, and psychological anomie. The city of Managua was growing quickly. Because of the war between Somoza's National Guard and the FSLN guerrillas, the missionaries were periodically withdrawn from Nicaragua. Competition with other churches, especially the Pentecostals, increased in the 1970s. The 1972 earthquake killed more than 10,000 people and left more than 50,000 homeless, greatly increasing anomie.³²

I have discussed above the third period (1981–89), which was characterized by a decrease in LDS membership. The country was still at war and still in turmoil. All families suffered the impact of mandatory military service. Inflation and poverty skyrocketed. Nicaraguans continued to suffer intensely from social, political, and political anomie. During the 1980s, membership in the Pentecostal churches skyrocketed.³³ Pentecostals successfully competed with and outbaptized Mormons. The appeal of the LDS organization decreased because of government harassment and the confiscation of LDS Church buildings. These events made the social costs of LDS membership very high. The LDS Church was forced to go underground and lost almost one-third of its members. All U.S. missionaries were barred from entering the country from 1982 until 1990, making the LDS missionary force much smaller.

As soon as government harassment ended with the transition to the neo-liberal government of Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, the LDS Church regained a strong appeal with Nicaraguans in the fourth period (1990–present). The former government harassment became part of the unique local experience and history of Mormons in Nicaragua. It had increased the commitment of the members who remained faithful to the

Church. The previous Sandinista harassment now made the Mormon Church more popular, as becoming a Mormon could be construed as an act of rebellion against the FSLN. Hence, many disillusioned FSLN militants were baptized during this period. At the same time, becoming a Mormon also showed a rejection of the interference of Cardinal Obando y Bravo and the Roman Catholic Church in national politics. The anomie factor remained high because of poverty and political instability. The LDS missionaries were again permitted to enter and proselytize freely, another important growth factor. Moreover, competition with the Pentecostals was less fierce, as the Pentecostal growth rates were slowly decreasing in the 1990s.

Conclusion

How did historical and political developments in Nicaragua affect LDS growth? The LDS Church was forced to maintain good relations with the Somoza dynasty to ensure that its missionary force would not be hindered. As the war between Somoza's National Guard and the FSLN guerrillas culminated in the late 1970s, LDS growth went up. When the Sandinistas took over in 1979 and gradually started to harass the LDS Church and its members, growth went down dramatically. Almost one-third of all registered members left, but the commitment among those who remained was strengthened by the persecution (as witnessed by Daniel's story). The LDS Church was under siege from the government and was forced to go underground from 1982 until 1990. Many disillusioned Sandinista militants found in the apolitical LDS Church a new purpose and a chance to use their leadership capacities.

When the FSLN was surprisingly ousted in the 1990 elections, the LDS Church was formally reestablished and the North American missionaries could work unhindered. Various factors coincided to produce the LDS membership explosion of the 1990s: an end to state persecution, increased commitment among the remaining LDS members, the growth of the missionary force, growing dissatisfaction among Nicaraguans with "politicized" Catholicism, and a decrease in the competition with Pentecostalism. Like elsewhere in Latin America, the Mormon Church was popular because of its efficient organization which radiated success and middle-class values, its solemn style of worship and hymns, its lay priesthood, its strict rules of conduct, its practical teachings, and its unique doctrines stressing eternal spiritual progress.³⁴

But the LDS growth explosion in Nicaragua came at a price—the same price paid earlier in Guatemala and Costa Rica.³⁵ The weak local LDS organization and leadership could not cope with the sudden influx of new members. Various strains and conflicts resulted from such cultural patterns as *machismo*.³⁶ The net result was that at least half of the new converts became inactive within a year after joining the Mormon Church. Among the active Mormons, again only about 50 percent became “core” members who consistently attended Church services, performed their callings, paid their tithes, and followed the Word of Wisdom. This difference sheds new light on Rodney Stark’s high estimate of 267 million Mormons (or his low estimate of 64 million) by the year 2080.³⁷ Stark is simply projecting the high growth rates into the future, ignoring both the eventual decrease in growth after five to ten years and the high inactivity rate of at least 50 percent.

It is important to stress that the period of explosive growth in Nicaragua for Mormonism immediately followed that of Pentecostal explosive growth in the 1980s. A similar phenomenon happened in Guatemala, where the Pentecostal explosion took place between 1976 and 1982 and the Mormon explosion followed in the late 1980s.³⁸ Although the situation was obviously different from one country to the other, the timing hints at a relationship between LDS and Pentecostal growth. Elsewhere I contrasted the more rational, intellectual appeal of Mormonism with the more emotional and experiential appeal of Pentecostalism.³⁹ Since most converts to Pentecostalism used to be nominal Catholics, I hypothesize that joining the Mormon Church is probably easier for former Pentecostals than for former Catholics. Pentecostals are also more successful in mobilizing their entire membership to act as missionaries to bring in new converts. I showed above that fierce competition with Pentecostals slowed LDS growth in Nicaragua, while decreased Pentecostal competition led to increased LDS growth (as happened in the 1990s). The Mormon missionaries also arrived in massive numbers in the 1990s, coinciding with the LDS boom in Nicaragua. This finding confirms that of various scholars that the most important factor influencing LDS growth is the size of the missionary force.⁴⁰ Finally, I speculate that the religious market always functions with a certain time lag. People may need some time to become used to new religious options, before they are willing to try them out. This intriguing relationship between the timing of Pentecostal and Mormon growth obviously requires further study.

It is highly tempting to speculate about the future of the LDS Church in Nicaragua and elsewhere in Latin America. In 2006, there were already seven LDS stakes in Nicaragua, up from four only three years earlier. I expect that, in the coming years, the construction of a small temple in Managua will be announced. If Nicaragua follows the growth patterns of Guatemala and Costa Rica, then in five to ten years its average annual growth rates will also decrease to about 2 percent a year. The LDS Church seems to concentrate its missionaries in countries where the prospects for growth are best. If this policy is continued, Nicaragua may still be among these countries for another five to ten years. Afterwards, a higher percentage of missionaries will probably go to countries like Paraguay, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, and later perhaps to future growth markets like Colombia and Venezuela. This article has shown that internal wars or anti-American governments in Latin American countries will at best only delay LDS growth. When the war in Colombia ends at last and Hugo Chávez marches out of his office in Venezuela, the LDS growth rates in both countries are likely to increase as part of a catching-up process like Nicaragua's in the 1990s.

Notes

1. Mark L. Grover, "The Maturing of the Oak: The Dynamics of LDS Growth in Latin America," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 85.

2. Rodney Stark, "The Rise of a New World Faith," *Review of Religious Research* 26, no. 1 (1984): 18–27; see also Rodney Stark, "Modernization, Secularization, and Mormon Success," in *In Gods We Trust*, edited by Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony, 2d ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1990), 201–18. Rodney Stark, "So Far, So Good: A Brief Assessment of Mormon Membership Projections," *Review of Religious Research* 38, no. 2 (1996): 175–78; Rodney Stark and Reid L. Neilson, *The Rise of Mormonism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

3. Henri Gooren, *Rich among the Poor: Church, Firm, and Household among Small-Scale Entrepreneurs in Guatemala City* (Amsterdam: Thela, 1999), 66; Mark L. Grover, *Mormonism in Brazil: Religion and Dependency in Latin America* (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1985), 137–39.

4. For a detailed analysis of LDS member categories, see David C. Knowlton, "How Many Members Are There Really? Two Censuses and the Meaning of LDS Membership in Chile and Mexico," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 53–78. For my own elaboration of

LDS membership types, see Henri Gooren, "The Mormons of the World: The Meaning of LDS Membership in Central America," Glenn M. Vernon Lecture, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Portland, Oregon, October 20, 2006.

5. Henri Gooren, "The Dynamics of LDS Growth in Guatemala, 1948–1998," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 34, nos. 3–4 (Fall–Winter 2001): Table 1, p. 73. In 2000 I wrote: "If the LDS Church in Latin America can strike the right balance between local expressions of LDS doctrine and the U.S. handbooks and manuals, between the Latin and the U.S. 'way of doing things,' growth might go on at a rate of 5–10 percent annually for many more years." Henri Gooren, "Analyzing LDS Growth in Guatemala: Report from a Barrio," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 115. It did not.

6. André Droogers, Henri Gooren, and Anton Houtepen, *Conversion Careers and Culture Politics in Pentecostalism: A Comparative Study in Four Continents*, proposal submitted to the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), 2003.

7. For an overview of the Conversion Careers approach, see Henri Gooren, "Towards a New Model of Religious Conversion Careers: The Impact of Social and Institutional Factors," in *Paradigms, Poetics and Politics of Conversion*, edited by Wout J. van Bakkum, Jan N. Bremmer, and Arie Molendijk (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2006), 25–40. On conversion careers and religious competition, see Henri Gooren, "Religious Market Theory and Conversion: Towards a New Approach," *Exchange* 35, no. 1 (2006): 39–60.

8. Statistics are for 2003 or 2004. This section is based on the following sources: CIA *Factbook: Nicaragua*, <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/nu.html> (accessed January 18, 2006); *Encyclopedia of the Nations*, <http://www.country-data.com/frd/cs/nitoc.html> (accessed January 6, 2006); World Bank, *World Development Report 2006* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2006), 292.

9. *El Nuevo Diario* (Managua newspaper), August 1, 2005, www.elnuevodiario.com.ni (accessed January 6, 2006). Forty-three percent of the people have incomes of less than US\$1 a day; 17 percent survive on less than US\$0.50 a day or \$15 a month.

10. *La Prensa* (Managua newspaper), April 22, 2005, www.laprensa.com.ni (accessed January 6, 2006).

11. *El Nuevo Diario* (Managua newspaper), June 12, 2005, www.elnuevodiario.com.ni (accessed January 6, 2006).

12. President Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Somoza may be a son-of-a-bitch,

but he's our son-of-a-bitch," quoted in Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *Blood on the Border: A Memoir of the Contra War* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2005), 1. However, David Schmitz, *Thank God They're On Our Side: The United States and Right-Wing Dictatorships* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 3, 313, reports that Roosevelt made this statement referring to Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo.

13. An entertaining literary work by a former *comandante* that deals with this time is Gioconda Belli, *The Country under My Skin: A Memoir of Love and War* (New York City: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002).

14. For an excellent scholarly treatment of this period, see Roger N. Lancaster, *Life Is Hard: Machismo, Danger, and the Intimacy of Power in Nicaragua* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). His interpretation of the 1980s in Nicaragua is similar to that found in *Encyclopedia of the Nations*, <http://www.country-data.com/frd/cs/nitoc.html> (accessed January 6, 2006).

15. CEPAD: Consejo Evangélico Pro-Ayuda al Desarrollo (Evangelical Committee for Aid and Development).

16. CNPEN: Consejo Nacional de Pastores Evangélicos de Nicaragua (National Council of Evangelical Pastors of Nicaragua).

17. Henri Gooren, "The Religious Market in Nicaragua: The Paradoxes of Catholicism and Protestantism," *Exchange* 32, no. 4 (2003): 340–60.

18. Terrence L. Hansen, "The Church in Central America," *Ensign*, September 1972, 40–42.

19. Deseret Morning News, 2005 *Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 2004), 392.

20. Although the neighboring Costa Rica has had a temple since 2000, its US\$25 immigration fee makes the trip to San José impossible. Nicaraguan Mormons continue going to the Guatemala City Temple by bus excursions.

21. David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 233–35.

22. *Ibid.*, 233.

23. *Ibid.*, 234.

24. Lisa Fairbanks, "LDS Church Attempts to Stay Out of Central America Politics," [Brigham Young University] *Daily Universe*, October 24, 1983.

25. Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?*, 234.

26. All names of informants are pseudonyms. I interviewed "Daniel" in Managua, February 6 and June 23, 2005; and "Gabriela" in Managua, May 17, 2005.

27. Mario was a bishop for seven years in the low-income neighborhood La Florida in Guatemala City. Gooren, *Rich among the Poor*, 169.

28. *Cumorah Project International LDS Database: Nicaragua*, <http://www.cumorah.com> (accessed April 26, 2005).

29. The Nicaraguan system of giving address directions is unusual. Street names and house numbers are rare and, where they do exist, are usually ignored. Addresses in Managua begin with a landmark (an existing or vanished building, shop, or restaurant), followed by a listing of how many blocks or meters should be traveled north (*al lago*), east (*arriba*), south (*al sur*), or west (*abajo*, referring to where the sun goes down).

30. Founded in the 1920s, Opus Dei is a voluntary Catholic group devoted to pre-Vatican II religious teachings and special acts of piety. It is both religiously and politically conservative.

31. Gooren, "Analyzing LDS Growth," 102.

32. *Encyclopedia of the Nations*, <http://www.country-data.com/frd/cs/nitoc.html> (accessed January 6, 2006).

33. Gooren, "The Religious Market in Nicaragua," 356–57.

34. See Gooren, *Rich among the Poor*; Gooren, "Analyzing LDS Growth"; Grover, *Mormonism in Brazil*; Grover, "Maturing of the Oak"; and Knowlton, "How Many Members."

35. Gooren, "Analyzing LDS Growth"; Gooren, "The Dynamics of LDS Growth in Guatemala."

36. Gooren, "The Mormons of the World."

37. Stark, "So Far So Good," 179.

38. Gooren, "Analyzing LDS Growth"; Gooren, "The Dynamics of LDS Growth in Guatemala."

39. Gooren, "The Mormons of the World."

40. Joseph T. Hepworth, "A Causal Analysis of Missionary and Membership Growth in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1830–1995)," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38, no. 1 (1999): 59–71; Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd, "Membership Growth, Church Activity, and Missionary Recruitment," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29, no. 1 (1996): 39.

Accusation

Angela Hallstrom

Nathan hears the accusation during bishopric meeting.

"Helen Sheeney is convinced," the bishop says. "She pulled my wife aside after homemaking meeting. Once she started in, it took nearly an hour to calm her down. Helen's certain Becky Mikkelson is trying to steal her husband."

Gary, the first counselor, tilts back in his chair. A small sigh escapes his chest. "How far has it spread?"

"Not far," the bishop answers. "That's why I'm telling the both of you. Just in case you hear any rumors floating around, do your best to quiet things. Sister Mikkelson doesn't deserve to have her good name questioned based on a suspicion. And we know how Sister Sheeney can sometimes be."

Nathan, like everyone else in the Taylorsville 25th Ward, knows exactly how Helen Sheeney can sometimes be. She looks innocent enough: curly-haired, partial to floral prints, so tiny it seems impossible she's borne eight children. But come to Gospel Doctrine class when Helen's in attendance, and it's easy to peg her as the resident doomsayer, a whirlwind of paranoia and irrationality. When she's not reminding the ward of the coming apocalypse—for which she is fully prepared, having not one but two years' worth of food storage she will *not* be sharing with the less obedient members of the ward, as a lesson to them—she's bragging about the letter she sent to the Presiding Bishopric regarding the low-cut swimwear on display at youth conference. Among young women and their leaders alike!

"I'll keep my ear out," Gary says. "Are you going to speak to Sister Mikkelson, then?"

"I don't think that's necessary right now," the bishop says. "So far, the only evidence Sister Sheeney gave my wife is 'looks' and 'feelings' and such. So I need to talk to Helen first. Get a better handle on whether

there's any merit in this at all. Hopefully, it will blow over without Sister Mikkleson even knowing about it. Does that sound all right to the two of you?"

Nathan sits silently in his chair, his palms clammy, a fist of dread in his stomach. He's been second counselor for three years now. He knows how these things work. He should speak out; he should say, "Wait, Bishop. Just hold on. Maybe Helen's not as crazy as we think she is." But he can't bring himself to tell the bishop why he believes Helen could be telling the truth. While nobody would call her husband, Peter, a great catch, he's a good guy. Polite. Easy to talk to. For years he's been the object of ward sympathy for his horrible luck in finding himself eternally hitched to Helen. Gossip has it that she was pretty good-looking as an eighteen-year-old and didn't seem all that crazy when Peter married her. The fact that he's put up with her this long they all know is a testament to his being a stand-up guy—exactly the kind of man Becky Mikkleson wishes she had for herself. Nathan knows this from personal experience.

* * *

The first time Becky came on to him, Nathan wasn't sure how to take it. Becky and Nathan's wife, Alicia, went way back. She was one of Alicia's first good friends when they moved into the ward, and Nathan had always been cordial to her. Friendly. She was an undeniably pretty woman: tall, curvy, blessed with a wide, willing smile and bright eyes. Nathan was self-consciously careful never to give her too much attention, a reflexive fear of the appearance of impropriety that went all the way back to his mission days. Not that Nathan had any reason to let his eye wander. His wife Alicia was beautiful, too—almost forty and she could still fit into her size six jeans from high school—but a man could never be too careful.

Nathan and Alicia double dated with Becky and her husband Tom only once. Nathan had never really considered Tom his kind of guy. Everything about him was clipped and severe, from his imperious voice to his meticulous hairstyle. Alicia didn't like him, either, calling him a jerk and a male chauvinist. Nathan was stunned to learn that Tom had yet to change a diaper after fathering four children in eight years. Alicia often wondered aloud how her friend put up with him, especially since Becky "didn't take crap from anybody else, ever."

But one way or another, Nathan got wrangled into this double date. They went to see some spy thriller—a James Bond, maybe? Nathan could-

n't remember—but it was the way Tom treated Becky at dinner afterward that Nathan would never forget. They went to the Old Spaghetti Factory, and not only did Tom interrupt Becky almost every time she opened her mouth, but he confiscated her complimentary spumoni ice cream. Literally snatched it away from her the minute the waiter turned his back.

"We both know who doesn't need this," he said. Nathan remembers Tom trying to keep his tone light and playful—as if his comment was part of some hilarious marital game the two of them regularly played—but it didn't work. He sounded cutting and cruel. Almost scary.

"Whatever, Tom." Becky sighed and rolled her eyes in Alicia's direction. Alicia pursed her lips.

After that, the conversation was uncomfortable and stilted, and the night ended early. Nathan and Alicia came home to an empty house—their girls were spending the evening at his mom's place, and she wasn't due to bring them back for another couple of hours. Alicia took the opportunity to run to the store and get some groceries. Nathan sat down and flicked on the TV. Moments later, he heard a soft knock at the door.

Becky stood on the front porch. She looked a mess. She'd cried off all her makeup, and her face and neck were mottled pink.

"Oh, for Pete's sake," she said. She wiped her runny nose with the back of her hand. "Just my luck that Alicia doesn't answer. Ha!" She tried to laugh.

Nathan wasn't sure what to say, so he apologized. "Sorry," he said, a little embarrassed for both of them.

"Oh, no," Becky said, waving her hands in front of her face. "I can't believe I just said that. I didn't mean it that way. I mean, against you. I'm just such a wreck. I hate having anybody see me looking like this."

"Don't worry about me," Nathan said. "Don't worry about what I think. Really. You're fine."

"I'm fine. Oh yes! Fine, fine, fine." She sang out the final sentence in frantic soprano that made Nathan nervous.

"Alicia's not here, though. Right now. Sorry." He tried to sound sympathetic.

Becky sighed and leaned her head against the doorframe. She took a deep, shuddering breath. "Of course," she whispered. "Of course she's not."

"But I'll tell her . . ."

She interrupted before he could finish. "I mean, I shouldn't have to take it anymore. I shouldn't!" Her head remained bowed against the door frame, obscuring her face, but Nathan could see her shoulders shaking and she began to cry in earnest.

Nathan wasn't sure what to do. Here Becky was, a woman in real distress, standing on his front porch and sobbing and making no move to leave. Would Alicia understand if he invited her in, he wondered? What would she think if she came home and found the two of them alone in the house? But how could he send Becky away in such a state?

"Do you need to come inside?" he offered.

She immediately nodded and sniffed and shuffled through the front door. She headed straight for the living room and curled up in the corner of the couch like a teenager, her legs tucked in, hugging her knees with her arms.

She lifted her eyes up at Nathan as he stood in the entry. He kept his hands in his pockets.

"Tom is a terrible husband, you know," she said. "He yells at me. Yells at the kids. Tells me I'm fat."

Her face was pleading, naked with emotion. Nathan felt ridiculous standing so far away from her—twenty feet? thirty?—when she obviously needed consoling. The last thing he should be conveying to her was more rejection. Yet he didn't know how he should respond. She wasn't fat—far from it. More voluptuous, really, but he couldn't say *that* to a woman who wasn't his wife.

She continued looking up at him, her eyebrows raised, expectant.

He walked toward her and sat gingerly on the edge of the couch. "He shouldn't say that," he said softly. He hoped this response would do the trick, make her take a deep breath and sit up straight, but instead she covered her face with her hands. Soon the sound of choking sobs escaped through her splayed fingers.

"Hey," he said. "Hey, now." He reached out a hand to touch her sympathetically on the shoulder, but then he remembered himself and pulled away before he made contact.

Becky's head was down, she didn't see. "I'm such a mess," she moaned. She reached over and grabbed a tissue from the end table and blew her nose, then looked up and smiled sadly.

"No. No, you're not," Nathan said. Even though, obviously, she was. But she wasn't always a mess. Usually she looked great. Just not right now.

"You're not a mess at all. Don't say things like that about yourself. Don't use that negative talk."

"You think that's negative talk? You should listen to Tom. He could teach you a thing or two about negative talk."

Tom. It was guys like him who gave men a bad name, Nathan thought. And a good woman like Becky—wait, any woman, really—didn't deserve his kind of treatment.

"It's not right that he should treat you that way. I mean it. Negative stuff. There's no place for it in a marriage. You've got to stay positive, build each other up. It's the only way."

"I know!" Becky exclaimed. "Exactly! That's exactly what I tell him. But does he listen to me? Ever? No."

"Well, he should. You deserve it."

"I do deserve it." She looked up at Nathan, suddenly full of conviction. "You're totally right. I deserve a lot of things, you know. I'm a good wife."

"I'm sure you are," Nathan agreed. He noticed her shoulders losing tension and a more balanced color coming into her cheeks. He saw her countenance changing, brightening and relaxing, and felt a flash of satisfaction charge through him. He was doing it, he thought. He was helping.

"And I'm not going to take his crap any more," Becky said.

"And you shouldn't. Never again!" He raised his fist in the air and shook it, smiling.

Becky looked at him fondly, her eyes still misty with tears. "Alicia's so lucky."

Nathan slowly lowered his fist. "She is?"

"She is. She's got a guy like you. She doesn't even know how lucky she is."

She placed her hand on his leg, just above his knee, and squeezed. Nathan drew in one sharp breath.

"If I had a husband like you, I'd appreciate you." She looked at him earnestly, not moving her hand.

"Well. Yes. I don't know." He turned his face away from her, simultaneously flattered and terrified, his heart thumping loudly in his chest.

"You've helped me so much, Nathan. Just in these few minutes. You've said more nice things to me just now than Tom has said in . . . I don't know. Years. You can't even realize." Then, before he knew what was happening, she gathered him up in an embrace. She held him tight, her

warm breath tickling his neck. He leaned into her for one brief moment and felt how soft she was, soft and sad and undeserving of all the pain her husband was causing. Then she released him from her grip and the realization of who he was—a married man, alone in his house with a vulnerable woman—rushed in and filled his chest with an uncomfortable tightness. He pulled back, flushed and blinking.

“I’m sorry,” she said. “I get wound up like this and I just go on . . .”

Nathan stood up quickly. Could she see the panic on his face, he wondered? Could she tell?

“No, no, don’t you worry. You’re fine. Everything’s fine. I’ll tell Alicia you came, okay?” He could hear the tenor of his voice. Strained. Unnerved. He concentrated on his face, rearranging his expression to one of calm neutrality.

Becky stood. She ran her fingers through her hair and took a deep breath. “I know I’m emotional. Crazy. This whole night has just been crazy!” She smiled. “But I needed someone to talk to or else I just might have exploded. And you were the perfect guy to talk to. The perfect one.”

“Oh, no, no. Anybody would have . . .” He let the sentence trail away. He walked to the front door and opened it.

“I mean it.” She stood beside him in the open doorway. “You’re the best.”

“I don’t know about that.” Nathan gave a little laugh, staccato and unconvincing, then turned to look down the street. Alicia’s car wasn’t coming. “Like I said, I’ll tell Alicia you came by.”

“Sure,” she said. “But you can tell her I’m okay now. After talking to you, I’m really okay.” She walked out to her car, but before Nathan had the chance to close the front door, she turned and looked up at him one last time. She smiled. Her eyes were teary and bright.

“Thank you,” she mouthed. She raised her hand and waved.

Nathan closed the door quickly. It wasn’t until she was safely away from him and down the street that he realized he’d forgotten to wave back.

After that day, he avoided Becky as best he could. But she and Alicia were friends, they were in the same ward, and once a little time passed Nathan convinced himself he’d misread her signals. Becky was a good person—maybe a bit lonely, and married to a jerk—but not the type to make an intentional pass at the husband of one of her best friends. A few years went by without another incident, and Nathan had almost put the significance of that day out of his mind until the ward Christmas party. Nathan

had stayed late to help the short-handed activities committee clean up. He knew Becky was on the committee; still, he was surprised when she popped her head into the Primary room, where he'd been cleaning up all alone.

"Hey," she said. "You need help?"

He did. The room was a mess: candy cane wrappers on the floor, chairs scattered everywhere, sprinkles from the Christmas cookies ground into the carpet. He paused for a moment, feeling a brief pang of concern. But why should he be concerned, really? If he couldn't trust himself, whom could he trust? "Sure," he said. "The quicker this goes, the quicker we're out of here."

"Well, I'm a good little worker bee," she said, and climbed on a chair and began pulling down the crepe paper attached to the ceiling. He looked up because he was concerned for her safety. The chair was rickety, he'd seen it wobble, and he wanted to make sure she wouldn't fall. But he let his eyes linger a fraction of a second too long as she lifted her arms over her head and stretched her body to reach the decorations, and she caught him. Like any woman used to being looked at, she could feel it, even with her back to him. She turned and glanced over her shoulder, a hint of a smile playing on her lips.

"So, you going to work or what?" she said, her voice a little breathy. Flirtatious. Her eyes flashed vivid blue.

Nathan looked away. "I'm getting right to it," he said, a bit too cheerfully.

They worked in silence for a moment, then Becky said, "I still think about that day you comforted me, you know."

"What was that?" Nathan kept moving, folding and stacking chairs.

"You know what I'm talking about." She hopped off her chair and walked over to where Nathan was working. She leaned casually against the wall. "I know you remember."

Nathan didn't answer.

"Sometimes I think about it when things are bad between Tom and me. How kind you were. And then I think about Alicia and how she complains and I just get . . ."

Nathan stopped working. He met Becky's gaze, curious now. "She complains?"

"Oh, you know. Little things. Petty things. Drives me crazy, though. Here you are, such a nice guy, good to her, and handsome . . ."

Nathan felt his pulse accelerate.

"You are!" she laughed. "You're the kind of man I should have picked, if I'd only known better."

"Come on," he said. He knew, now, he should stop the conversation. Politely excuse himself and leave. But Becky's bright eyes, her open smile, even her way of standing with her shoulders thrust back and her arms hanging loose at her sides seemed so easy and nonthreatening at that moment. Inviting.

"Do you ever have those thoughts?" she asked. "Like if I had it to do all over again, I would have done it differently? I could have made my life happier?"

In a flash, Nathan imagined a life with Becky: her easy laugh, her attentiveness. For just a moment he even thought about her body, so full and yielding, completely different from Alicia's. Alicia. Her name snapped his mind back into focus.

"Becky, we shouldn't be talking this way."

A flicker of irritation moved across Becky's face. "Why? Why not?"

"Just . . . we shouldn't. I don't think. It just seems . . ." He paused, searching for the word.

"Inappropriate?"

"Yes! That's it. Inappropriate."

"Fine. We'll work then." She grabbed up an armful of chairs and dragged them across the room. She didn't even try to stack them neatly, letting the chairs fall against each other in uneven rows, the clang of metal on metal ringing through the room.

"Becky?" Nathan offered, afraid he'd hurt her feelings, hoping if he appeared conciliatory she'd stop making such a racket.

"I'm just so *sick* of that word," she said, her voice tight with anger. "'Inappropriate.' I'm not doing anything wrong. Neither are you. We're talking—*talking*—and that's somehow against the rules? I get so tired of tip-toeing around everybody all the time. Especially men." She pointed her manicured finger at Nathan. "A woman should be able to talk to a man. I mean, are men that weak? I can't even mention that I think Alicia should treat you better without you turning it into some kind of sexual thing?"

Nathan stiffened. "I never said it was a sexual thing."

"Then why shouldn't we be talking this way?" She folded her arms across her chest. She stared at him, bold, unflinching. "You tell me."

He shifted his eyes away from Becky's face. It was late. Soon, Alicia would be missing him.

Becky sighed. "Like I would even try, anyway. Like I don't know how much you love your wife."

"And I do love her."

"That's all I was trying to say. That she's lucky, and doesn't even know to appreciate it." She put her hand on the knob of the closed door beside her and turned it. Then she smiled. "And don't worry. I won't tell."

* * *

After the bishopric meeting and all during sacrament, Nathan thinks about his responsibilities: to Helen. To the bishop. To Becky. To the truth. The minute the bishop started telling Helen's story, Nathan knew the accusation had some validity to it. It probably hasn't gotten to the point of outright adultery—Peter is a good man, and he doubts if Becky, even, would go that far—but he also knows Becky and how desperate she is. Alicia tells him that her marriage to Tom is only getting worse. And it isn't fair to Peter, having to fend off advances from such a beautiful, needy woman. The poor guy's married to Helen, for heaven's sake. Catch both Peter and Becky on an especially weak day, and who knows what could happen?

He decides that instead of going to Sunday School, he'll take a detour past the Primary room and try to catch Becky, hopefully alone. She was recently called to be the Primary president and she's often out in the hall, rummaging through her closets, making sure the Primary runs like clockwork.

The hall is empty. He walks over to the Primary room, peeks his head in, and sees Becky up in front of the children reading a story from the *Friend*. She's a good storyteller. Even though she's reading from a magazine, she has all the children in the room quiet, listening attentively. She's an excellent Primary president, so good the bishop often says he doesn't know what he'd do without her. She looks up from her magazine and sees Nathan. Without missing a word in her narrative, she raises one finger to indicate she'll be right out to speak with him. Nathan nods his head and retreats to the hall.

He becomes more and more nervous as he waits. He scans up and down the empty hall, hoping—praying—that the bishop, or Alicia, doesn't

stumble upon him and ask what he's up to. He's never been a good liar. They would see right through him immediately.

Finally Becky bursts out of the Primary room. Her cheeks are red and she seems a little breathless, almost winded, and he wonders how a person could get herself so worked up reading a story to a bunch of kids.

"Official business?" she asks.

It's been two years since that Christmas, two years since Nathan has talked to her in any capacity other than as a courteous fellow ward member—or as second counselor. She probably assumes he's here at the request of the bishop.

"Not really," Nathan says. He runs his hand through his hair. "Well, kind of. Maybe."

"So is it or isn't it?" Becky says lightly. "Fess up! Are you guys in the bishopric letting the Relief Society steal my music leader or something?"

"Not quite." Nathan takes a deep breath. "I just have to ask you a favor."

"All right."

Nathan looks over his shoulder. Two deacons have escaped from Sunday School and are messing around near the back door, pushing each other into the coat hangers. The sound of jangling metal ricochets down the hall.

"Hey, guys," Nathan yells. The deacons glance at him sullenly, then shuffle away.

"There's got to be a way to keep those kids in Sunday School!" Becky is smiling, completely unaware. "I hear bribing them with candy sometimes works."

Now the hall is empty. This is the time to say what must be said. Move on. Be done. He leans in. Becky follows his lead and leans in too, her brow creased with curiosity.

"I'm going to have to ask that you stay away from Peter Sheeney," Nathan says softly.

Becky blinks and cocks her head to the side. "Meaning?" She is whispering, too.

"You need to stay away from Peter Sheeney. Helen's been talking. She has some—what should I call them?—some, um, concerns." Nathan can feel the sweat starting along his hairline. His lungs constrict inside his chest, and he's afraid she can hear his quick breathing.

"She's got *concerns*?" Becky backs up. "You can't be serious."

"Don't worry, though. The bishop and Gary don't believe her." Nathan realizes he's looking down at the floor and quickly glances up to read her expression, but she doesn't seem worried at all. In fact, she's twisted her mouth into a smirk. The look of disdain reminds him of his daughter Tina, who is thirteen years old and never sorry. Never wrong.

Becky gives a derisive snort. "I'll have you know I've probably spoken to Peter all of five or six times in my entire life." Her voice has returned to its normal volume.

Nathan gathers up his courage. "But given our past history, you know . . ."

A slow smile spreads across Becky's face. "So that's what this is all about."

"No, no. It's not. Trust me! This isn't about me. It's about Peter. And Helen. And you."

"Right," she says slowly. "Well, Peter's a friendly acquaintance. Nothing more."

"Like I was a friendly acquaintance?"

"Oh, geez," Becky rolls her eyes. "Don't flatter yourself."

Now Nathan is upset. He was there. He knows what happened. She came on to him, not once, but twice. She knows her power over men like him—men like Peter, too—and she uses it. Gets a kind of charge from it. And she can't pretend she doesn't.

"I'm only saying that Peter is probably vulnerable to your advances." Nathan realizes his voice, as well, has increased in volume. He scans up and down the hallway, relieved to find no one within earshot. "It's dangerous, is all," he whispers. "You're walking a thin line."

Becky tilts toward Nathan, as near to him as she's been in years. Her face is just inches from his. Her breath smells like peppermint.

"What are you," she whispers. "Jealous?"

Nathan's mouth falls open. "What? You've got to be kidding me. What?"

"You accuse me, I accuse you. It's only fair."

"I haven't done anything wrong," Nathan says. "Not a thing."

"And neither have I." She pulls her shoulders back and stands up straight. With her heels on, she's a very tall woman. Her eyes are burning and her cheeks blaze pink. "Remember that."

After church, the bishop pulls Nathan into his office.

"I spoke with Sister Sheeney," he says. "Helen agrees now that she was overreacting. Just so you know. So you don't think anything, well, unjustified about Sister Mikkelson."

"Oh, of course not," Nathan says. "Of course I don't."

"Nothing worse than having crazy rumors flying!" The bishop claps Nathan on the back. "But if you hear any talk going around, make sure you put the rumors to rest. If you hear anything from your wife, or anyone."

"Definitely, I will."

"Good, good. Glad to see this episode pass."

The ward clerk taps on the door, and the bishop excuses himself. Church is over and Nathan is ready to go home. He leaves the office, eager to search for his family in the halls. He wants to find them fast, get home, have dinner. Put this day behind him.

Nathan scans the foyer. He can't find his family, but he sees Becky across the room, her husband standing beside her, his hand at the small of her back. She turns her head and sees Nathan looking and she holds his gaze, unafraid. Nathan is the first to look away.

Drought

Larry T. Menlove

The reservoir was drying up, and the former townspeople of Jordan Gap came to the receding shoreline at the end of winter. They camped on the flat and stood in the mud at the edge of the water to watch.

The church steeple was the first vestige to emerge from the green gray water, striking through on a Sunday morning. Bishop Green said, "Oh blessed day. Heavenly Father has heard our prayers." The rest of the townspeople peeked at each other and smiled cautiously as the sun burst over the white pines on the craggy ridge of Jersey Mountain. The people squinted at the sun and then back down at the water.

Word spread into the bureau that the people had come back, and Monday afternoon, the land manager, Josh, drove up to see for himself. He drove over the dam, a pink rock earthen affair that looked like a big foot stamped between the canyon walls. He drove on up the shoreline road to where the tents were. He got out of his green truck and walked to the water's edge where the people stood in a line.

Children gathered rocks in piles and then threw them as far as they could into the reservoir. Calvin and Karla Christenson pointed at the familiar TV antenna with the drying algae hanging limply from it over the dull water and then they embraced each other.

"But what is it you intend to do?" asked Land Manager Josh.

"Isn't it obvious?" the townspeople said.

"But it won't last," said Land Manager Josh. "Can't you see that?"

Spring was coming with northbound coots and black geese landing to sojourn on the receding water. The birds swam in and out of the second-story windows downtown and then lifted off the water with swirling wings beating the surface. They circled the people standing on the expanding shore and headed north by northeast in a cacophony of squeaks and squawks.

Brother and Sister Christenson were the first to move back in. The

water had been gone around their house for three days when they drove right up to the garage door, got out of their Suburban, and went into their house. They swept the floors, washed the windows, and scrubbed the countertops. Upstairs in the bedroom, they lay down on fresh, dry sheets, cheerful to be home with a renewed commitment to each other.

Two days later Rahanna, a widowed Lithuanian refugee with two small girls, moved back into her old house down the street from the Christensons. She put up new pink curtains while her daughters ran around to the backyard and played on the swing set. The younger one first had to take a dead rainbow trout from the swing seat and toss it into the water that was now down beyond the back fence. Rahanna's new boyfriend Dick oiled the chains on the swing set that had rusted and begun to stiffen.

As the days and weeks wore on, more and more folks came back. The Ruebens and the Gadsons. The Mandujanos, the Smiths, and Charlie Coombs, who was the baker. He set up shop again right downtown in his old bakery with the big, stone, wood-burning oven. His white bread had an earthy seasoning and his buns were a little silted, but that was to be expected until the oven tempered the reservoir flavor out.

A baby boy was mysteriously born to Fred and Cindy Montague, who had prayed and tried for years to conceive. And old Val Dart died of a stroke. His family buried him in the cemetery just past the park in an old family plot where the grass was coming back green and lush.

One blustery day Mayor Stein rolled into town and cruised down Main Street in a convertible, the reservoir dust whipping up behind him. He marched up the stairs to city hall and declared himself once again the mayor of Jordan Gap. His first act of business was to throw his hat high into the air where it spun and spun on the wind and, as far as anyone could tell, never came back down again.

Land Manager Josh kept a wary eye on the townspeople from his place on the ridge as they moved back in. He asked the higher ups what action should be taken. Let them live there if they want, the higher ups declared. Spring runoff will, well, run them off, was the general consensus.

But the runoff never came, and spring gave way to early summer and the reservoir dried up even more. The town was nearly full of residents again. Most all the former townspeople had come back to claim their land. The school had reopened in March and closed for summer break at the end of May. The Smiths asked their neighbors, the Mandujanos, to watch

their home and take in the newspaper while they packed up the car and their kids and went on vacation to Lake Halo in Swanson Valley.

The old Dart place was put up for sale and newlyweds Troy and Tana Young put down earnest money on it. They moved in a week later. Troy carried Tana over the threshold and into matrimonial heaven.

From his view on the ridge, Land Manager Josh saw the brotherly love and unadulterated care everyone in Jordan Gap had for one another. He drove down into town in his green truck and ate lunch at the Half Moon Diner. The other diners smiled and tipped their hats and said, "Hello." Land Manager Josh walked up Main Street after he ate his BLT and looked in on the candle, candy, and shoe cobbler shops. He drove out of town and told his wife Alice that very night that he wanted to live in Jordan Gap and live like they did. Alice snuggled next to him on the couch tighter than she had in years and whispered in his ear what a good idea that was.

Then, on a warm early June morning—the morning after the ward/block party where everyone in Jordan Gap ate hot dogs and hamburgers served in Charlie Coombs's buns (which were tasting less and less like water everyday) and lit firecrackers and sang under the stars—the widower Jacob Farley tilled the ground on the little late garden plot he had alongside his house. He relished the way the soil was thick with peat and the bones of catfish. He turned the dirt and laid furrows in straight lines and planted corn, beans, beets, onions, red bell peppers, and even, God willing, a pumpkin for next fall. He turned the rich earth back over the seeds in the sun and went inside for a glass of well-earned lemonade. And then, as it was his habit after planting his garden, he went to his bedroom, kneeled at his bed, and there, alone, old Brother Farley prayed humbly for rain.

POETRY

I Teach Six-Year-Olds about Jesus in Sunday School

Deja Earley

A girl I've never met meets me at the door,
whines at my leg until I hold her. Thin arms,
thin mouth, a sour smell I overlook while fetching
crayons, glue sticks, snacks. She lifts her dress,
exposes the top of her baggy white tights, looks at me.
We both sing: "Faith is knowing the sun will rise . . ."
I sit next to her, tap her hands, whisper no.

Kyle, on the front row, holds a cardboard
box on his lap, a green scrawl on the lid.
It's his turn to toss the bean bag and recite
a miracle, but he stops, looks at me, says,
"This is my box," like I have to meet it
before he can toss. He places it on the chair,
doesn't know the miracle, returns it to his lap.

Michael sucks on his plastic bat, swings it so
I'm showered in spit. "What's the bat's name?"
I ask, taking two fingers to slow it. "Jesus."
When I end the bat business, he howls; and I hold
him like the Pietá, his sweaty back sticking to my arms.
I rock him, pray in his ear until he sleeps,
his tears soaking my blouse, his bat tucked in my bag.

The Clearing

Stanton Harris Hall

“Quantum physics makes the seemingly preposterous claim (actually more than a claim, since it has been upheld in countless experiments) that there is no ‘is’ until an observer makes an observation.” –Jeffrey M. Schwartz and Sharon Begley, The Mind and The Brain (New York: ReganBooks/HarperCollins, 2002), 263.

“Physical events enter our awareness as reality only when addressed with a specific question.” –Stanton Harris Hall

Spring again.
The browns, the ochre,
the brittle death of fall and winter
recast in transcendent greens—
vibrant, transparent, resurgent.

The first rays of morning sun
illuminate the canopy of this New England forest
beech, sugar maple, and hickory,
transforming the verdant ceiling
into a vision of Monet’s water lilies floating overhead.

The boy Joseph slips quietly out the door
and into the sunrise
moving quickly through the hayfield
to the small forest clearing
he knew so well.

Kneeling,
the question
in his heart takes voice,
a simple question
but one of quantum significance,

and the answer unfolds—
first in darkness
and then—
in a brilliance
“above the brightness of the sun.”

No mountain, no cloud,
no still small voice,
simply brilliance.
The ultimate allegory of renewal,
the Father, the Son, the answer,
all clothed in light.

Yorick

Javen Tanner

A cold spell
for my desecration
slipped upward from your grave.

Some ceremony attended you:
pinyon bead, arrowhead,
broken pottery and bone—

only your empty sockets
saw that this was all vanity.
Your epitaph faded

on the wall above you:
a fleeing antelope,
meaning hunger, flesh, struggle;

a weeping god,
meaning wisdom, purity, loneliness;
three handprints, open and empty,

meaning gone, gone, gone.
My civility was lost
in the subtle shock of history.

Wild again, I felt mortality
in everything: the scratch
of sagebrush, the desolation

of cattle fences, the low swoop
of the red-tailed hawk.
I grabbed your skull

and asked, "Is it fast?
Is it too fast?
Did anyone notice

you had lived?"
"Shhh," you answered,
as sand fell through your teeth.

Some with Shadows

Dixie Partridge

A day of long-walked silences,
waterless red gullies and hard-rock
plateaus. We've met few on the trails
this summer past my father's dying.
Now we drink slowly,
clay of our tongues softening.
I lean into a twist of dry cedar,
strain to remember far-back stories
of a creature losing its shadow,
a native taboo against crossing another's shade,
of slippings between worlds.

Once my father worked as a guide, horse-backing
through the Hoback wilderness
where he could tell which canyons
would bring you to grief.
His horse saved him twice
from falls deeper than any return.

When I stand, bones feel thin
over hard ground, empty canteens and wrinkled maps
become too much to carry.
Behind us the sun is setting over sandstone.
Already a sliver-moon cools the sky
like a wafer rim of ice,

lunar sheen that could be said
to be cold . . .
or soothing: solace for the worn
bewilderments of the living, a vanishing point
before we slip to the myth of dreams.

All day, the only human things we touched
were each other's shadows, sizing themselves
in chameleon significance.
What looks like an owl in the darkening
lands in a scrub pine, turns to bark.

While Planting Hollyhocks

Dixie Partridge

In the dim green
I can't tell what I'm remembering,
or what's been handed down. . . .

There's my silent grandmother on the porch;
the poplars, pungent odor from bark
I peeled from twigs.
Hollyhocks blur through the stirring
dark leaves. Their blossoms already dry
make me smell hay-making heat
drawn to my hair like a burning.
But the tree I've climbed
is cool enough, and I don't want
to answer my mother's tired voice. . . .
Finished with morning milking,
she's wringing clothes from her outdoor Maytag,
tries to hurry—my father needs her in fields.

From still branches above the home
my mother is trying to make of Grandmother's,
I first feel it: Mother works too much
and Grandmother can't, though she refuses a wheelchair
and changes her appliqued apron
every day. The calico flowers
stay starched and clean.

Maybe I'm afraid of Grandmother,
who came outside after I did,
edging her bent joints and falling
into her chair because knees
are frozen in one place. The kick of a horse
began her long stiffening.
She is never angry or not angry.

I am somewhere between
happiness and sadness, somewhere words
are becoming important, and I feel danger
in the need to deliver a message
I do not quite get.

After My Brother's Remission

Dixie Partridge

When dawn comes this early,
a slice of sky visible from my bed
textures waking. Today's thin layers clabber
white . . .

and I think after all these years
of the back room in the farmhouse,
my siblings and I startled
when a pillow seam gave way
and dumped feathers in drifts
over and around us, the sight almost worth
a new edict from my father, forbidding forever
the pillow fights.

In private moments of those earliest years,
we learned how to scream gleefully
while making hardly a sound,
steeling ourselves in pleasure
or pain (that gradual human habit)—
small offenses and injuries of games
instantly quieted, comforted
between the secret ways of children

who need adults not far
away . . . just outside the rambunctious,
reverent rooms of childhood.

Black Handkerchief

Robert A. Rees

Lying on the table,
he was as handsome
as the day he had taken her
through the veil.

Now his body was inert,
his anger veiled even in death.

She looked at his nakedness
one last time before the high priests
dressed the body.

After the garments, robe, and
sash, after the bright-leaved apron
and the stiff white cap,
she asked the bishop

for a few minutes alone with the man
she had been sealed to for time
and all eternity. She did not

kiss him as she intended,
but looked one last time
at his rigid face, then, slipping
the black lace handkerchief from her sleeve,
she placed it over his face and quietly
closed the casket.

Wedding Flower

Robert A. Rees

Her body was cold, nearly
frigid in the room
set aside for such matters.

He watched them thread
her arms and legs through
the sacred undergarment with its
embroidered symbols.

The robe, yellowing from disuse, was next,
followed by the apron, its green leaves
darkened around the edges,
and then the sash, slightly soiled,
which the sisters tied neatly at her waist
in a big bow.

After the viewing, when the sisters
had placed the cap on her head and
pulled the veil over her face, and everyone
had retreated to the chapel, he stood alone
looking at her face one last time.

Just before he closed the casket,
he took the flat black flower
he had found pressed in her Bible
these fifty years, and placed it
over her heart.

Sonnet to a Japanese Spring

Armand L. Mauss

Spring has come to old Nippon!
Standing on a hill I see
Verdant valleys neatly sown,
Stepped and terraced, and a bee
Buzzing busily drops down
To gather nectar from the sea
Of blossoms on yon cherry tree.

Fuji-san has lost its gown,
Frosty white through winter's night;
Yet a glist'ning snowy crown
Rests atop its purple height.
Brooks flow bubbling, gurgling down
To meet the river, silv'ry bright
In Rising Sun's first rays of light.

There's nothing which will more display
The proof of God's omnipotence
Than gazing on this vast display
Of Nippon spring's magnificence!

Note: I wrote this poem while living in Japan fifty-six years ago. "Nippon" (Nip-POHN) is the Japanese name for Japan. "Fuji-san" is an alternate (and more poetic) synonym for "Fujiyama," which means "Mount Fuji." I have capitalized initial letters in "Rising Sun," a translation of "Asahi," which evokes an ancient, honored symbol in Japan.

At the End of the Street Lies the Sky

Michael Parker

At the end of the street lies the sky
dressed in the purple magician's robe
of eventide and the winter storm.
Tonight she sculpts stairs of ice and
snow. She casts spells upon the laden
earth and the dying man can hear
her invitations in the blizzard, in
dreams that are like all other dreams
except soundly, deeply, more vividly.
He leaves while his wife is sleeping.
He leaves without any good-byes.
There is no gentle kiss for her lips
no tousling of the boys' hair or
kiss for the daughter with the moon-
shaped face. This is not intentional.
How could he know the destination
of this dream? He leaves his house,
walks down the silent street
past the rows of barren trees
that shield the homes of dear
neighbors who helped round out
the days, grow the kids, and watch
year after year arrive and depart.
He does not think this odd tonight.
He considers this an adventure
walking past the shroud of snow
and onto the glistening stairs
that climb the breast of sky.

REVIEWS

The Diary of a Historian

Richard Lyman Bushman. *On the Road with Joseph Smith*. (New York: Mormon Artists Group Press, 2006). 83 pp., unbound in paper folio in cherry wood slipcase, \$150.

Reviewed by Marshall Hamilton, proprietor of Harpers Ferry Books, a used and rare bookshop in historic Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, who has, as his main Mormon history interest, the Nauvoo period.

In 1945, Fawn McKay Brodie's biography of Joseph Smith, *No Man Knows My History*, was published by Knopf. The book received critical acclaim, establishing Brodie's career as a biographer.

Nevertheless, the biggest natural market for a scholarly bio of the Prophet, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was much more restrained.

Brodie presented Joseph Smith as a good-natured, lazy, extroverted, and unsuccessful treasure seeker, who, in an attempt to improve his family's fortunes, first developed the notion of golden plates and then the concept of a religious novel, the Book of Mormon, which he partially based on an earlier work, *View of the Hebrews*, by a contemporary clergyman. Brodie asserts that at first Joseph Smith was a deliberate impostor who, at some point, became convinced that he was indeed a prophet—though without ever escaping “the memory of the conscious artifice” that created the Book of Mormon.

Fawn Brodie grew up in Utah in a Mormon family; her father was the brother of Apostle David O. McKay. Despite her family connections, Brodie was excommunicated from the Church in 1946.¹

Brodie's work is often seen as the first scholarly attempt to tell Joseph Smith's life story. Sixty years after the publication of *No Man Knows My History*, Alfred A. Knopf published another such attempt: *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, written by Richard L. Bushman, a retired history professor from Columbia University.

Timed to coincide with the bicentennial of Smith's birth, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* was published on September 27, 2005; by the

following May, Knopf had printed 70,000 copies, vastly exceeding Bushman's own hope for sales of 20,000 or so.

Bushman, like Brodie, refused to shy away from controversial topics in his biography. Like Brodie, he describes Joseph Smith's money digging, plural marriages—including polyandrous relationships—and freemasonry, among others.

I was interested in Bushman's book and curious about how it would be received by members of the LDS Church and by Church leaders. Modern correlated Church manuals seem to me to be at least as sanitized now as they were two generations ago. The tolerance among the leadership of the Church seems about as resistant to departures from orthodoxy as ever. I wondered whether the Church might treat Bushman in the same way Brodie had been handled sixty years ago.

So I was very interested when I learned that Bushman has documented his hopes, his concerns, and his successes in an unusual author's memoir: *On the Road with Joseph Smith*.

At the suggestion of Glen Nelson, who chairs the Mormon Artists Group of New York City, Bushman kept a diary for about a year, from July 2005 until August 2006. During that time, the editorial work on *Rough Stone Rolling* was completed, the book was published, and Bushman traveled around the country to publicize it. The book was reviewed by some Church and national publications and ignored by others; Bushman found both acceptance and rejection from LDS and non-LDS readers. In the diary, Bushman describes his reactions to these events and presents a look at how they affected him.

By revealing who he is and what he stands for and by candidly describing his own reaction to other people's responses to the book, he manages to bear an eloquent testimony of his own faith. With this unconventional expression of testimony, he conveys a message of hope for those whose faith does not rely on the uncontroversial version of Church history provided by the Church Curriculum Department, whose testimony does not depend upon an idealized image of perfection in Church leaders, and whose own questions of faith are actually strengthened by learning of other people's struggles in being faithful.

Before I get too deep into what Bushman says, let me describe the first edition of this work. It is, in a word, beautiful. At \$150 per copy it should be nice; I'd say it's worth it. "Slipcase" only begins to describe the outer package. It's not cardboard like most slipcases; it's real wood: natu-

ral cherry, known for its streaks of blond and pink sapwood and warm red heartwood. Each slipcase, of course, is unique.

The text is set in Caslon #3 Roman, a traditional face, with fairly pronounced serifs and a very pleasing balance of thick and thin vertical strokes. This variant of William Caslon's seventeenth-century original is slightly heavier than the original. My only complaint with the type is that the lines are more than six inches long. Even with larger than usual leading, that's too long to be truly readable.

The pages are 8½x11, printed in a single column. The paper is Mohawk Superfine white with an eggshell finish. This is not a book in the usual sense; there is no glue or stitching to bind the pages. The leaves of paper are printed on only one side, and collected in a folio with a green cover, printed on the front and spine with the title of the book. The entire folio fits into the slipcase for safekeeping. The walls of the slipcase are about ¼" thick, fitted and glued together, creating a very sturdy "book."

Mormon Artists Group published 100 copies of this edition, each one signed "Richard Lyman Bushman" and hand-numbered on one of the introductory pages. Regrettably, the first edition is completely sold out. As of this writing, one copy is available on internet book marketplaces, offered at \$500; but a second edition is planned for May 2007 from Greg Kofford Books of Salt Lake City, to be released at the Mormon History Association's annual meeting.

The text of *On the Road with Joseph Smith* consists of actual entries from the diary, full of Bushman's candid introspection. Was Bushman an apologist for Joseph Smith? He considers the question, anticipating that he will get "stuck" with the term. He finds the term unfair to his motives and the result of his seven years of work. He tried to tell the story as he saw it, without bending the evidence. He tried to see the world as Joseph Smith saw it. Is that apologetic? he asks, without knowing the answer (6).

The first formal review of *Rough Stone Rolling* was mostly positive, written by Jeffrey Needle of the Association of Mormon Letters. Bushman was annoyed by Needle's comment that as Bushman presents the story in all its richness, "warts and all," he added "the veneer of credibility" (7, 11). It's sometimes surprising how thin-skinned Bushman was as reviews of his book came out. Sometimes he is annoyed by more mundane concerns: losing his cell-phone charger, for example.

The diary also quotes letters that Bushman received and answered, plus his preparations for providing quotations for news articles, reviews,

media interviews, and personal appearances. Bushman works hard on every answer to make it pithy and clear. Especially perplexing is dealing with the “tough” issues like polyandry. Bushman suggests that Joseph wanted to bind everyone to everyone and admits that it “is hard for us to understand these days.” Bushman admits that his explanation is not quite satisfactory but tells a correspondent: “I hope that you don’t make it a matter of belief or unbelief, but of inquiry” (63–64).

The major media reviews for *Rough Stone Rolling* were by Larry McMurtry in the *New York Review of Books* and by Walter Kirn in the *New York Times*. McMurtry talked much more about Joseph Smith (he dislikes him) than about Bushman (McMurtry feels Bushman is naive for refusing to face up to problems with the golden plates) (41). Kirn imagined Bushman wearing “intellectual bifocals”—one lens skeptical and clear, the other reverent and rosy, as good a description of a Urim and Thummin as I can imagine. Overall, Kirn, a lapsed Mormon, is supportive of Bushman’s efforts to make sense of Joseph Smith. Bushman is relieved not to have been “publicly shamed” by the *New York Times*, his hometown newspaper (68).²

All in all, Bushman reveals much about himself in the diary: his concerns, his occasional depression, and his reasons for the choices he has made.

Bushman is a faithful, active member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In fact, he is a stake patriarch and a temple sealer. He even sought and received a blessing from Apostle Boyd K. Packer before starting to write *Rough Stone Rolling* (21). He makes clear that he’s not sure how Church authorities might react to the published biography or what repercussions there might be from the Church and notes no official condemnations of either him or the biography. The only direct response is what he calls a “generous note” from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland (68). He does describe “critical comments emanating from the Church Education System” which he characterizes as “a kind of unbending stiffness that denies the realities” (55).

Although I personally have met Bushman only once, at a Sunstone meeting, his willingness to share his personal reactions throughout the diary makes me feel quite well acquainted with him.

For example, to a reader who says he still believes in the Prophet but has troubling questions, Bushman advises confronting concerns directly: “[T]ake the top three [problems] and write them down . . . describe exactly

what happened and why this bothers you. . . . Consider the biases, both pro and con, of those who describe the events. Then ask yourself why does this seem contrary to what a prophet would do. What exactly is wrong? . . . Try to be hard-headed about this" (72). He advises that the reader consider Smith's accomplishments as well as the concerns and weigh whether the entire package is in keeping with his prophetic role. I personally found his advice quite profound—a way for a thinking person to survive in a faith-based organization.

This diary can, and should, be read in a single sitting. After Bushman describes his highs and lows, his good interviews and those where he felt himself falling short, the thoughtful and the thoughtless reviews, he ends the diary with an essay he wrote for Laurel Thatcher Ulrich to be published in the online journal *Common-Place*. In his essay, he describes his thinking on the role of passion, commitment, and balance in making sense of our world and its history: "What is the place of personal values and beliefs in scholarship? Our personal commitments bias our work, but is that necessarily bad? Historians write with passion about slavery, race, women, war and peace, freedom, and injustice. Is their work marred by their belief? Beyond question, their values shape the work" (81). He asserts: "My advantage as a practicing Mormon is that I believe enough to take Joseph Smith seriously" (82).

Bushman's problem with Brodie is that she took a cynical view of Joseph Smith. Once she had decided that he was an impostor, that assumption cast a long shadow over her biography of Smith. Joseph's exhortations to godly service, his self-sacrifice, his pious letters to his wife, and his apparent love for his fellow-workers all look like blatant manipulation to her.

Skeptics and cynics do not work at penetrating the mind of an impostor; as a believer Bushman can try to show what about Joseph Smith appeals to his followers, today's Mormons as much as those who moved from England to Nauvoo.

In refusing to be cynical, Bushman also made a conscious decision to be candid. Mormons technically don't believe in infallibility, but by insisting on perfection in human leaders, Church members have created a virtually impossible image of their prophets. Curiously, the efforts to fashion a better-than-human person in Joseph Smith have resulted in a person who is more image than human.

In *Rough Stone Rolling*, Bushman tried to keep everyone, believer and

unbeliever, interested in his tale. He now sees that by occupying the middle ground, he lost readers on both sides: non-Mormons who refuse to be interested in a person who could be a prophet, as well as Mormons who find the Joseph Smith in the biography just a bit too rough still.

His diary concludes with this comment: "At times I thought there was no middle ground for my version of the Mormon Prophet. I came to envy historians who write about slavery or patriarchy; no one doubts their basic beliefs. But on second thought, I realized that my book was better for being written for a divided audience. I cannot say that *Rough Stone Rolling* achieves a perfect balance, but it does offer an empathetic and, so I hope, a candid view of an extraordinary life" (83).

Notes

1. For a quick introduction to Brodie, and references to reviews and other biographical information, see the entries at en.wikipedia.org for Fawn McKay Brodie and *No Man Knows My History*. For Brodie's excommunication, see Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 58–59.

2. For the quotation from Kirn, see <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/15/books/review/15kirn.html> (accessed March 2007).

Editor's Addendum

The second edition of the Bushman road diary alluded to above is now available in bookstores or at the publisher's website, www.KoffordBooks.com. Richard Lyman Bushman, *On the Road with Joseph Smith: Author's Diary* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 141 pp., paper: \$14.95.

Analyzing Spiritual Things from a Sociological Perspective

Rodney Stark and Reid Neilson. *The Rise of Mormonism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005., 192 pp., \$39.50.

Reviewed by Jeffrey Needle, book review editor for the Association for Mormon Letters; student of and commentator on the American religious tradition with an emphasis on Mormonism

The name Rodney Stark is very familiar to LDS readers. His interest in Mormonism began with his long-time friendship with fellow sociologist

Armand Mauss, also a familiar name and a member of the Church. Stark penned some astounding predictions several years ago, projecting what seemed to some an amazing growth rate for the American-born church and viewing Mormonism as the first new “world religion” since the advent of Islam.

The current volume, a collection of loosely connected analyses, is the outgrowth of requests made by colleagues and friends to gather some of his foundational writings containing his observations on Mormon growth and its impact on the world. Neilson, who has authored and/or edited several books on Mormonism, provides an extensive introduction, bringing to light both Stark’s views and the various reactions to those views. It’s an excellent summary and a must-read for anyone wanting to understand the direction of Stark’s research.

Stark introduces readers to the idea of “religious capital”—what believers have invested in their faith, noting that “the greater their store of religious capital (the more they have invested in a faith), the more costly it is for people to change faiths” (25). We can see this dynamic at work every day. Converts to Mormonism risk offending friends and family; those who leave Mormonism often leave a comforting and nurturing community. Such adjustments come at a cost. And Stark is correct; the costs are higher when the convert has been “invested” in his or her former faith.

Stark believes that revelation has played a large part in the formation of four of the great religions. In a fascinating study of four prophets (Joseph Smith, Jesus, Mohammed, and Moses), Stark compares and contrasts both the methods and content of the revelations. He examines the commonalities of their experiences—their environments, social situations, etc.—and then introduces the idea of the “holy families” of Mormonism, Christianity and Judaism, focusing on the immediate family members of the prophets.

But immediate family is just the first layer of interaction for the prophets. Each developed a social network through which he advocated and taught his unique gospel. In true sociological style, Stark studies the mechanics of evangelization and analyzes the phenomenon of conversion under the heading “Choice and Capital” (“capital,” as previously noted, being the investment each person has in his or her religion and how it sets the cost of conversion). The idea of networking is further discussed, not just in the context of conversion, but also as a tool of retention.

All of this may seem a bit mechanical. When analyzing spiritual things from a sociological perspective, such an outcome is hardly unex-

pected. Social scientists enjoy quantifying and explaining behaviors. In this spirit, Stark, in considering the costs of membership, presents Mormonism as a “costly” religion (85), one which demands much sacrifice from its members. But isn’t the choice of a costly religion a basically irrational choice? No, he would insist. Stark finds that religious choice, like other decisions, “is generally based on cost-benefit calculations and is therefore rational behavior in precisely the same sense that other human behavior is rational” (94). That is, people will make their choices based not solely on the demands made on them but also on the benefits they perceive as accruing from meeting those demands.

It is the burden of the Church, therefore, to represent the benefits of membership to outweigh the costs. Intrinsic to this process, Stark insists, is the ongoing effort to modernize mainstream religion. He draws an interesting conclusion: “My model proposes that modernization causes the secularization of conventional faiths and that this in turn leads not to a secular society but to the rise of new religious institutions better adapted to the new social and cultural institutions” (102). I suspect many traditionalists will disagree with this conclusion; but it raises an interesting question: Can we account for the rise of Mormonism, at least in part, by the liberalization and secularization of the mainstream religions in the early nineteenth century? This is an interesting hypothesis.

I took great interest in Stark’s observation that “new religious movements are likely to succeed to the extent that their doctrines are nonempirical. Religions are less vulnerable to the extent that their doctrines are focused on a nonempirical reality and are not subject to empirical tests” (119). Indeed, such is the nature of “testimony”—an unprovable but firm belief in that which cannot be proven factually. If one can be led to believe without having sound evidence for that belief, then maybe contrary evidence will leave the follower unshaken.

All of these factors are part of the context for Stark’s larger model, consisting of ten elements, identifying why religious movements succeed:

The Latter-day Saints often retain cultural continuity with the conventional faiths of the societies in which they seek converts; their doctrines are nonempirical; they maintain a medium level of tension with their surrounding environment; they have legitimate leaders with adequate authority to be effective; they generate a highly motivated, volunteer religious labor force, including many willing to proselytize; they maintain a level of fertility sufficient to offset member mortality; they compete against weak, local, conventional religious organizations within a relatively unregulated

religious economy; they sustain strong internal attachments while remaining an open social network, able to maintain and form ties to outsiders; they maintain sufficient tension with their environment—they remain sufficiently strict; and they socialize their young sufficiently well as to minimize both defection and the appeal of reduced strictness. (137)

This formulation goes a long way in explaining, from a nonspiritual perspective, the success of Mormonism as a new religious movement. But is this what the true believer really wants to hear? Belief in the revelatory basis of one's religion surely negates the need for sociological analysis and scientific study. But Mormonism has become a large, worldwide movement, poised to become the next great world religion; and as such, it will always be the focus of study of pundits and scholars.

The Rise of Mormonism is a thoughtful and insightful look at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, not so much as a movement born of revelation and restoration, but rather as a unique religious institution bearing the optimal characteristics for maximum growth and sustenance. Stark's analysis will not sit well with some who see the success of the Church as a divine reward rather than the result of various sociological factors. But Stark's conclusions merit examination and evaluation, and will surely provoke discussion in many quarters.

Depression and the Brethren of the Priesthood

Mack Patten

Editor's note: With this essay Dialogue continues its series on the relationship between the Church and persons with disabilities.

During the last few years, I have come to feel that, if I were in charge of Church jargon, we would get rid of the words *blessings*, *rewards*, *punishments*, and *tests*. In place of those words, we would begin using “lessons to be learned.” I have also come to believe that some venue, or arena, or, at least, some safe place should be available where members could voice their concerns—without guilt—about their distresses, their disappointments, and their frustrations at what is going on in their lives.

I have in mind a place or situation such as I found in my home ward when I returned from the Austrian Mission in 1963. At that moment, my ward had five other elders who had served in German-speaking countries. What a relief it was for me to learn that I was not the only elder in the world who had seen more of the devil in his mission than of Heavenly Father. In my mission, for example, there was the investigator whose doctor had prescribed coffee for her heart condition. We had promised her that if she would sacrifice her coffee, the Lord would bless her. Instead, she had a mild heart attack. That was also where President Henry D. Moyle yelled at the assembled missionaries from our entire mission for not accomplishing the same thing that England, Scotland, and Ireland had done with what became known as kiddie baptisms. President Moyle then went on to humiliate our mission president by telling President Smith to sit down and be quiet when he attempted to explain some things. Yes, following my mission, sitting in the foyer during sacrament meeting and sharing my experiences with the other elders helped, I believe, to keep me

active in the Church. As I say, people need a safe place like that to express their frustrations and disappointments.

Since about 1980, I have been plagued by two serious problems that have more than once driven me to desperate measures regarding my faith and belief as well as my own emotional sanity. One is my physical health, the other my emotional health. I cannot pinpoint when my depression began. My physical condition began in the early 1980s and has now progressed to the point when I can no longer use my legs. I live in a care center where I often lie in bed waiting for an aide to change my dirty diaper, wondering if this is what Heavenly Father really wants for me.

My life was following the path of the ordinary Mormon boy in Salt Lake City during the 1950s and the 1960s—filling a mission, attending the university, getting married. The first two parts were easy; the third part, getting married, led me into experiences that I had never dreamed about and had never been prepared for in Primary, priesthood meetings, or four years of seminary. The purpose of this essay, then, is to share with *Dialogue* readers my experiences with these two debilitating diseases: depression and IBM (myositis), and to try to explain how my own faith and the actions of other Church members—including my family—have played both a positive and a negative role in the development of those two diseases and their effects on me.

My marriage was unique in many ways, the most striking being that on the day I was married, I inherited three children from my wife's first marriage: two boys and a baby girl. Elaine and her former husband had separated before she knew she was pregnant; following her attorney's advice, she did not proceed with the divorce until after the baby's birth. Allison was born in October, and Elaine and I married the following March. I still remember the quizzical looks of jewelers as we walked up and down Main Street in Salt Lake City looking for a wedding band while carrying a three-month-old baby in our arms. I had wanted to marry since returning from my mission in 1963 but had been sadly unsuccessful in convincing any young lady to accept me. My wife had just gone through a painful divorce; consequently, we faced some serious struggles in creating our own family. Nevertheless, for the next ten years, five children were born at almost regular two-year intervals, making a total of eight children when we finally stopped—six boys and two girls. Elaine was a stay-at-home mother and my profession—a public school teacher—didn't put big bucks

in our bank account, so I worked the typical extra jobs to help supplement our income. But it never seemed to be enough.

We always ran out of money about a week and a half before the end of the month, putting a strain on everything. Then, in September 1983, eighteen months following the birth of our last child, our second son decided to climb onto his friend's motorcycle—not a wise decision. He had ridden around the block once when the motorcycle slid on some loose gravel. Unable to control the large bike, Matt apparently hit the curb, throwing him off the bike. According to the people who witnessed the scene, the motorcycle flipped up into the air and came down on Matt's head. Following a frantic phone call from a ward member, Elaine and I jumped into the car and followed the ambulance the two blocks to the accident, arriving just in time to watch as our son died in a pool of his own blood. Perhaps that day was the beginning of the end of the marriage, or perhaps it was merely one event that contributed to the end of the marriage.

We struggled on for almost ten more years, the relationship and the home environment deteriorating at a slow, but painful rate. Sometime during those years, I wrote at the top of a filled journal, "The Destruction of the Mormon Family," then threw it into the burning fire in the fireplace, not wanting anyone to read about how bad things had become. Surprisingly, we were still able to send our oldest son on a mission, even in the middle of the mess at home. Who really knows why a temple marriage comes to an end, especially when both partners had remained active in the Church, attended the temple, filled callings, and tried to have family home evening and daily prayers? Three sets of marriage counselors had little effect on us. Talks with the bishop led nowhere. Priesthood blessings seemed useless.

Finally, when our youngest son was ten, I filed for divorce and have suffered devastating guilt ever since at being the one who broke up our "eternal family." Playing the blame game would be too easy here, so I'll stay away from that. However, I will say that none of our children ever blamed me for the divorce; and during the next several years, each of the children chose to come and live with me. They all agreed, at least in talking with me, that the divorce was better than the constant arguing and bickering at home. And since then, each of our five sons has filled an honorable mission. Of our two daughters, one married in the temple and has

remained in the Church; the other has struggled with personal and physical problems most of her life.

I am reminded of the story in the New Testament when Christ's disciples asked him, "Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2). While I'm not totally comfortable with the reply that he had been born blind so "that the works of God should be made manifest in him," I find the first part of the answer—"Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents"—very significant.

My disease was misdiagnosed in about 1984 as polymyositis. According to the muscle biopsy, so the doctor said, I had had the disease for five years. Although the protocols I followed for the next four years had no harmful effects, neither did they have any beneficial results. Sometime in 1988, my rheumatologist told me of a research study being conducted at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, that was focused on my disease. Thereafter, I became a research patient, traveling back and forth until about 1992. The first month I was there, the doctor established that I had, instead of polymyositis, sporadic inclusion body myositis, a nonfatal but also nontreatable auto-immune disease that is slowly but steadily destroying all the striated muscles in my body. I have gone from normal ambulatory abilities to walking with a cane, then crutches, then being in a push wheelchair, and finally in a motorized wheelchair.

As I write this essay during the fall of 2006, my legs are useless. I cannot transfer from the chair to the bed or anything else without help. I cannot use the toilet without help. I can feel the muscles in my arms and shoulders growing weaker. Although I am still able to type, I have lost most of my fine motor skills. I can no longer make a fist with just one hand. Consequently, I moved into the care center during the summer of 2006 to ease the burden on my family of taking care of me. Two months later, I underwent a procedure of having my esophagus dilated to ease the difficulty in swallowing. I have been hospitalized twice with aspirating pneumonia.

The disease, along with its results, has sorely tested my faith. I wish I could be more patient. I can say, however, that two days after some rather intense prayer for patience, two images came into my mind that gave me relief: one was the image of Mother Teresa moving among the poor, diseased, and outcast in the hovels in India. The other was of Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail, from which Doctrine and Covenants 121 comes. If they

could do it, so could I. The fellow across the hall from me has cystic fibrosis; three men here are amputees; on the floor above mine are those with dementia. I am now one of “those” whom I used to serve on Sundays, providing music and gospel messages. But now I don’t go home following the services; I am already at home.

As for my loss of emotional health, I am aware that *depression* is one of the dirty words of Mormon culture, usually placed on the same level as *divorce*, *abuse*, and *homosexuality*, somewhere under the coat rack or in a corner of the lavatory. Not only is it a dirty word but when we do read personal stories or retold stories of depression, especially in Church publications, we usually read about women and depression. Seldom does any publication deal with depression in men. It’s as though a valiant priesthood holder is somehow exempt from that disease; or at least, if he has it, he should be able to overcome it through faith and priesthood blessings—one of the comfortable myths of Latter-day Saints.

However, depression, like so many other trials and tribulations, is no respecter of gender, age, or faithfulness. Emeritus Seventy Alexander B. Morrison wrote in *Valley of Sorrow* that even children as young as two or three years of age can suffer from depression. I am now a sixty-four-year-old believing high priest, and I first recognized depression in my late thirties and early forties.

As I have said, I was a public school teacher, my wife and I had a large family, and she didn’t work outside the home. Even when I worked two jobs during the school year and an additional job during the summer, there was never really enough money. The financial stress, with its attendant marital difficulties, combined, I believe, to begin my bouts with depression, which were increased by Matt’s death in that meaningless motorcycle accident. But because I was busy most of the time, I didn’t really pay much attention to what I now know were symptoms of depression.

About five years ago, after being divorced for almost ten years, I started falling deeper and deeper into the black void. I had raised the family. I lived alone and spent most of my time alone. When my next-to-last son left for the mission field, I learned of the Church service missionary program and applied for it. Because of my background in English, the brother in the archives section of the Church History Department was eager for me to work with him. Happily, I began my assignment in the Church Office Building at the beginning of the year. Three months later, the first of the serious depression bouts hit, and I went down like the pro-

verbial rock in the lake. One day on the way to the office, I simply started crying for no reason. Nevertheless, by the time I arrived there, I had pulled myself together and was able to complete the assigned tasks for the day. That night, however, I cried myself to sleep. The next day I had to call in sick, knowing that I wasn't sick, but also knowing that I couldn't face anything or anyone. I think I stayed in bed until about 3:00 P.M., when I got so hungry that I had to get up to eat. That was one scary day.

A few months later, while trying to figure out something on the computer, I asked one of the brothers there to explain to me how to do it. Instead of explaining it to me, he simply did it, then continued with his own work. I felt an almost uncontrollable anger taking over. I wasn't stupid; I wasn't illiterate; I wanted to know how to do the process so that I wouldn't have to ask again the next time. I went to my supervisor, told him I wasn't feeling well, and then went home where I sat in a chair becoming angrier and angrier with the man who didn't take the time to explain to me how to do what I wanted to do. During the next six years of Church service missionary work, I was like a "bouncy ball"—up sometimes, but also down sometimes, with no clear pattern that I could distinguish. I finally told my supervisor that I was bi-polar, and that I was becoming more and more unstable. He was very understanding, telling me that he wanted me to continue working as my health allowed.

Certainly my physical disease has been the dominating factor of my life the last five to eight years. It has also contributed to my depression as much as anything else. I know that, barring some unforeseen death-causing incident, I will eventually be totally bedridden, completely dependent on other people for everything.

Four years ago, following an unpleasant scene with two of my married children, in a fit of petulance, self-pity, and anger, I overdosed on some sleeping pills, planning to wake up in a different existence than the one I had fallen asleep in. However, that didn't happen. I woke up in the psychiatric ward of the University Hospital. My children had discovered what I had done (I had left detailed information and instructions regarding wills, house titles, etc., on the computer), and had taken me to the hospital. A psychiatrist saw me and prescribed some medication. During the four days I was there, various counselors spoke with me, I visited various group therapies, and I seemed to have few problems. The staff at the hospital made an appointment for me to see a counselor at LDS Family Services. I can't say enough good about him; he was totally accepting, com-

pletely sympathetic, and compassionate. However, he was not a cure-all; I often had to call him after hours to talk with him on the phone when I knew I was not safe. He never failed me. Unfortunately, whoever was in charge at Family Services decided he was needed more somewhere in the South than he was needed in Salt Lake, and so I lost one of the threads that was connecting me to sanity and stability.

I could go on and on with stories of my continued depression, but I really don't think they would add much to what I've written here. I have to confess that I have reservations about priesthood blessings; my physical experiences have dented my spiritual nature enough that I am very cautious of saying that priesthood blessings have helped me. Perhaps they have, but I just don't recognize the results. I continue to suffer severe depression; I take my medicine, try to eat well, try not to be alone all the time, and I do say my prayers, unorthodox though they may be. Since my first experience in the psychiatric ward, I have been there twice more, with no assurance that I won't be there again.

When I tell people that I suffer depression, most of them have no idea how to respond; consequently they begin ignoring or avoiding me. I do, however, have a wonderful home teacher who is willing to listen to almost anything I say. He is a great comfort to me. My children do what they can for me, with their busy schedules and families to take care of. In following President Hinckley's advice to read the Book of Mormon, I have discovered a scripture, Alma 7:12, that has taken on new meaning for me: "... that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities." Christ has suffered all so that he can understand our suffering. When I concentrate on this scripture, I am filled with a sense of hope and faith that eventually I will no longer have to suffer because Christ, knowing and feeling my despair, will have removed the suffering from me. As for now, I have learned that even believing priesthood holders are subject to the demons of depression.

Frau Rüster and the Cure for Cognitive Dissonance

Roger Terry

When Elder Callister and I leaned our bikes against the fence at Hermann-Löns-Straße 9 and walked to the door, I had no idea that what was about to transpire would shape and anchor my soul for decades to come. And when we left the house and descended the steps less than an hour later, I had no context for gauging the magnitude of the experience we had just shared. I'm still acquiring that context.

Herr and Frau Rüster were our best investigators. At least Frau Rüster was. Her husband tolerated our visits and was cordial, but his search for the truth was more hypothetical than it was either pragmatic or urgent. Frau Rüster, on the other hand, wanted to know. Oh, how she wanted to know. She was reading the Book of Mormon and praying about it. And her Reformed Lutheran pastor was so intrigued by her new quest that he decided to lend a hand. He generously transformed his weekly Bible study hour into anti-Mormon hour. I'm confident these new lessons took far more preparation than his conventional treks through the New Testament. Such sacrifice on his part! Frau Rüster, of course, was thoroughly confused. On one side she was hearing the missionary lessons and reading the Book of Mormon; on the other, she was being exposed to every bit of dirt, credible or concocted, that good Pastor Kühne could unearth.

More than thirty years have now passed since I last saw Frau Rüster, but hardly a week goes by that I don't think about her. I'm quite sure she crossed my mind a few years back when a department reorganization moved me from my editorial post at the *Liahona* to the *Ensign*. I was somewhat surprised to learn that the *Ensign* subscribed to both *Dialogue* and *Sunstone* and circulated them among the editorial staff. I couldn't help

wondering about these subscriptions and the reasoning behind them. But then, the *Ensign* subscribed to many interesting publications: *Journal of Mormon History*, *BYU Studies*, *Pioneer*, *Utah Historical Quarterly*, *The Religious Educator*, *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Reader's Digest*, *Biblical Archeological Review*, *Desert Saints*, the Seventh-day Adventists' *Signs*, Billy Graham's *Decision*, the Community of Christ's *Herald*, and my own personal favorite, *Vision*, a magazine aimed at the restoration branches that split off from the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the 1980s. I figured somebody wanted the editorial staff to be informed. I wanted to be informed too. So I read all these periodicals. Took them on the bus with me as I commuted between Orem and the Church Office Building.

I learned a great deal. I learned that Tommy Lasorda coached in Ogden before he became famous in L.A. and that young Heber J. Grant had an affinity for beer. I learned that Seventh-day Adventists are saved by grace and so is Billy Graham. I learned that *Newsweek* has better cartoons than *Time*. I learned that the Community of Christ doesn't like to quote Joseph Smith. In fact, to me, they seemed a bit embarrassed at the uncomfortable fact that he is still considered their founder. I learned that, as of a couple of years ago, the restoration branches were squarely between a rock and a hard place. They believed their First Presidency and Quorum of Twelve Apostles had apostatized en masse a couple of decades ago. They wanted to organize a new church, at least a stake, but they couldn't because the revelations they still revere declare that only the First Presidency can organize a stake. I'm wondering how things will eventually shake out.

I also learned that the Garden Tomb really wasn't the place where the Savior's body was laid to rest. I learned that it was actually Sidney Rigdon who wrote the Lectures on Faith and that some of the "doctrine" in them is rather, shall we say, Protestant, and this may explain why the lectures were eventually dropped from the Doctrine and Covenants.

But of all these publications I was reading, *Dialogue* and *Sunstone* were most informative. I learned that adultery may, in fact, *not* be the sin next to murder. I learned that *Napoleon Dynamite's* Happy Hands Club represents the female cross-brain function. I learned that Noah's flood may have submerged only the Black Sea area and may have happened about 5600 B.C. I learned that the universe may be just a small portion of a more comprehensive multiverse. And I learned that in our corner of this hypothetical multiverse lives a whole host of very unhypothetical Mor-

mons and former Mormons and half-Mormons and quarter-Mormons and quasi-anti-neo-post-meta-counter-pseudo-Mormons who wrestle with dozens of issues and questions—everything from Native American DNA and polygamy to priesthood equality and evolution. I learned that, spiritually speaking, some of these issues have blown people adrift and have blown others apart. I learned that many intellectuals and individualists and iconoclasts have enormous frustration and microscopic patience with the perceived inflexibility and irrationality of Church bureaucracy. I generally shook my head and rolled my eyes at this last group. They had obviously never worked at Church magazines. What did they know?

I have not been naive for many years now, but this new reading opened my mind to the struggles of individuals as they come to see inconsistencies in the Church, its history, its founder, its scriptures, and its bureaucracy—as they shed their innocence and replace it with something that is far less comfortable for them and far less comforting. Most of the distress for thoughtful Mormons seems to revolve around Joseph Smith in one way or another. Rightly so. Richard Bushman stuck it in his title where no one could ignore it, but Joseph really was a rough stone. His life was surrounded by controversy because he *was* controversial—imperfect and unconventional and incomparable. Neither his fellow Saints nor his enemies could go to the Legacy Theater to see his life portrayed with skillful editing and majestic overtones. They saw him up close and personal, both the grandeur and the blemishes. Still, he himself had it so very right when he said to his followers shortly before his death, “You don’t know me.”¹ They didn’t, and we certainly don’t.

Some of the questions that perplex people concern the intersection of knowledge and belief. Is it really possible to know anything for certain in the field of religion? I’ve read essays by faithful intellectuals, rational arguments they have constructed to support their belief in the Church and their dedication to its teachings. Others try to deflect the question. “The goal of religious development,” a social scientist once asserted, “might not be the serenity of certainty, an absolute acceptance on faith, but the capacity to sustain the tension of not knowing. To be able to live with uncertainty, to be able to cope with the insecurities of an exceedingly complex world in order to control it would be a higher achievement religiously, I think.”² In other words, we should not seek to know with certainty but should embrace our uncertainty.

Another writer reasoned, “It’s not too hard for me to translate ‘I

know the Church is true' to 'I know I have had a burning in my bosom which confirms the goodness of the Church and the truth of the principles which it teaches.'"³ His argument, apparently, is that this inner burning doesn't really constitute knowledge. So what *can* one know?

It has been a long, long time since I could say with a straight face that the gospel is simply beautiful and beautifully simple. I've gone the rounds with Correlation more than once over nebulous doctrines and unusable sources. Yes, Joseph Smith restored the fulness of the gospel, but he died before he filled in all the gaps and answered all the questions. Perhaps this was intentional.

Where Pastor Kühne got his information, Elder Callister and I didn't know; but as our Reformed Lutheran nemesis sowed the seeds of doubt, we tried to dig them up before they grew roots and sprouted. At least Elder Callister did. I was brand spankin' new in Germany and was struggling just to follow most conversations. I couldn't have added my two cents worth at that point even if I'd had the correct change. You see, I wanted to know the truth almost as desperately as Frau Rüster. Almost. I had grown up in a traditional Latter-day Saint home, but I had been more interested in sports and girls than deep religious questions, or even shallow ones. I knew all the Sunday School answers, but I'd never asked any questions—particularly the one I should have asked—until I walked through the front door of the Mission Home in Salt Lake City and became quite suddenly a stranger in a strange land. The bar in those days, of course, was much lower. The spiritual atmosphere in the Mission Home and then the LTM (which, I was told, stood for Longest Two Months) was entirely foreign to me. I struggled. I'd had six years of German in school, so the language was easy. But spiritual things were near impossible.

Most of the other elders were sure in their testimonies. They made me feel like a spiritual infant. But some others were in diapers, too—to a degree. As the weeks passed, however, they would inevitably stand in testimony meetings and tell how they had gone to an empty classroom one night and prayed and received an answer. I tried that too. But my prayers bounced off the ceiling, ricocheted around the room for a few seconds, then faded quickly into an ever-deeper silence. I was so ignorant spiritually I didn't know what a witness of the truth would feel like. If I received one, would I even recognize it?

I prayed incessantly. I pleaded. I probably made promises I knew I couldn't keep. Silence. I read the Book of Mormon through in two and a

half weeks. I took Moroni at his word. I asked with a sincere heart and with real intent. Silence.

I did know what the Spirit felt like. We'd met in passing a couple of times, once very impressively during the sacrament meeting where Doug King gave his mission report. But I didn't assume that this encounter constituted a witness. It was a strong feeling, certainly a burning within, but it didn't impart any knowledge to me, other than the rather obvious fact that I wanted to serve a mission and become the kind of person Doug had become. For some reason, I assumed a testimony was more than just a warm feeling. I'd had warm feelings about *The Lord of the Rings*, Charmian Carr in *The Sound of Music*, and Grandma's pumpkin chiffon pie. Maybe I was naive. Maybe I wasn't. But even the warm feeling eluded me. I swore I'd never fly off to Germany without a testimony. But I was basically chicken. I didn't want to endure the disgrace of giving up and going home. Eventually, I convinced myself that going to Germany, even without a testimony, was the right thing to do.

I arrived in Rendsburg, a small city in the heart of Schleswig-Holstein, in late August. Six weeks passed slowly without any revelations from heaven; and by the time we leaned our bikes against Rüsters' fence and approached the door, it was October. I'd been praying for a witness the whole time, but my hope was running low. Interesting thing was, I was praying for Frau Rüster to get a testimony with more real intent than I was praying for myself at that point. I loved the Rüster family because Elder Callister loved them. We prayed for them morning, noon, and night, and I pled for them in my personal prayers. I don't remember what sorts of information or disinformation Pastor Kühne was feeding Frau Rüster, but I can certainly imagine, and I know the questions he raised lay at the heart of her struggle. But she wasn't about to give in to either side so easily. She wanted to know the truth about Mormonism. She wasn't about to get baptized into this "sect" unless she got an answer. Logic and persuasion were not going to work on Frau Rüster. An LDS family was fellowshipping her and her husband, but that wasn't going to make a bit of difference either. Only the answer to one particular question would do, thank you. And for some reason God wasn't in any hurry to give that answer.

I've been intrigued recently as I've read essays and articles by Latter-day Saints of prominent (or at least assumed) intellectual stature. Sometimes I get the impression they can't see the forest for the trees. Perhaps because they grew up with it, they don't see what Frau Rüster saw so

clearly. The validity of the LDS Church is not to be discerned by putting all the pieces of a theological puzzle together. It isn't to be proved or disproved by determining whether Joseph Smith was involved in folk magic, by showing scientifically that Native Americans are or aren't descended from a band of wandering Israelites, or by exploring whether the politics and economics laid out in the Book of Mormon reflect Joseph's concerns about nineteenth-century America. I think I understand the questions and reservations thoughtful people have about Mormonism—doctrinal, historical, ecclesiastical, cultural, and organizational. I understand them, but for the most part I don't share them. I can't. Whenever I try, I keep coming back to what happened to me and Elder Callister and Frau Rüster on October 2, 1975, in the living room of the house on Hermann-Löns-Straße.

Frau Rüster was home alone that day—her husband was at work, her twin nine-year-old daughters at school—but she invited us in. The predictable Pastor Kühne had been by recently with a new piece of anti-Mormon propaganda, and she was perplexed. I don't remember Frau Rüster's particular question that day—it seemed she had an endless supply—but I will never forget Elder Callister's answer. Maybe he had it all planned out. Maybe the Spirit whispered something to him. Or maybe he was just at his wits' end over this exasperating woman and all her doubts. Whatever the reason, he pulled from his pocket a brochure recounting Joseph Smith's story and simply read a couple of paragraphs to her:

It was nevertheless a fact that I had beheld a vision. I have thought since, that I felt much like Paul, when he made his defense before King Agrippa, and related the account of the vision he had when he saw a light, and heard a voice; but still there were but few who believed him; some said he was dishonest, others said he was mad; and he was ridiculed and reviled. But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision. He had seen a vision, he knew he had, and all the persecution under heaven could not make it otherwise; and though they should persecute him unto death, yet he knew, and would know to his latest breath, that he had both seen a light and heard a voice speaking unto him, and all the world could not make him think or believe otherwise.

So it was with me. I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision; and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision; I

knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation. (JS-H 1:24-25)

While Elder Callister was reading, a marvelous presence entered the room. How can I describe it? It was like pure electricity. It was as if an almost suffocating cloud of power and light filled the room. I have felt this power at other times in my life, but never like this, never with this intensity or immediacy or purpose. It was overwhelming, and it was the purest and holiest influence I have ever encountered. Elder Callister stopped reading, and none of us could speak for quite some time. I don't know how long we sat there in the throbbing silence. It could have been an eternity. One of Joseph Smith's teachings about the Holy Ghost was demonstrated vividly by the presence that visited us that day. It bypassed the body completely and communicated pure intelligence to the spirit. Imprinted on my soul during that encounter was a very specific and unmistakable message: "It is true! It is all true!" To this day I can honestly say I *know* only two things with absolute certainty—that I exist and the truth of what the Spirit revealed to me that day. I have never felt a presence more real than the one that came into Frau Rüster's home that day. Mere flesh and blood pale in comparison.

Eventually, not knowing what else to do, Elder Callister handed the Joseph Smith brochure to Frau Rüster and asked her to read it and pray about it. We excused ourselves. As I recall, she didn't say a word or even see us to the door. When we stepped outside into the thin air and walked to the gate, Elder Callister exclaimed, "Wow, did you feel that!"

I don't know that I answered. I had my witness. I knew. So did Frau Rüster. When we visited a couple of days later, she asked to be baptized. She said she had her answer. No more questions. We told her no. We wanted her husband to be baptized with her. We wanted him to receive the same witness. We wanted a whole family to join the Church together. Missionaries tend to be idealists. Herr Rüster was a bit shaken up by this new development, but he agreed to more seriously investigate the Church. He promised to read the Book of Mormon and pray. He never did. And I believe this is the greatest regret I have from my mission, that we insisted Frau Rüster delay her baptism. The doubts returned, and so, of course, did Pastor Kühne.

I learned through this experience that another thing Joseph Smith taught about the Holy Ghost is true: "A man may receive the Holy Ghost,

and it may descend upon him and not tarry with him” (D&C 130:23). “There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost,” the Prophet explained. “Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the Gospel, but he could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost until after he was baptized. Had he not taken this sign or ordinance upon him, the Holy Ghost which convinced him of the truth of God, would have left him.”⁴

Frau Rüster did not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost in time. Perhaps someday we will be held accountable for our decision. We were both nineteen. I hope God takes that into account. But eventually Frau Rüster lost the very thing she had prayed for and received. We were devastated.

A transfer took Elder Callister away soon after this experience. Elder Blades and I tried to teach Herr Rüster. He was indifferent. Frau Rüster faded. One day she told us that a famous pastor was coming to town to preach. She invited us to come listen to him, insisting that we would feel the Spirit when he spoke, just as we had in her living room. We went with her and her husband. Elder Blades and I didn’t feel a thing. I don’t think Herr Rüster did either. Frau Rüster, on the other hand, claimed she felt the Spirit there. I was not convinced, so I asked her if it was the same Spirit she had felt that October day in her living room. “No,” she confessed, “that Spirit was calling me to repentance.” Fascinating, I thought, how the Holy Ghost could tailor a specific message for each person present.

I’ve often reflected on the experience we shared that distant October day. And I’ve come to two conclusions. First, I’m very grateful for Frau Rüster and her sincere desire to know the truth of our message, even if she did lose that knowledge. I’ve wondered whose prayer was really being answered that day. I don’t know. But I am fairly sure of one thing: Without her faith and persistence, I doubt that I would have received an answer to my plea. My faith was at low tide by that time. Like many people, because I had prayed long and hard and had received no answer, I was at the point of giving up. I was ready to just concede that I didn’t have the faith to get a witness. If I am honest, I must confess that it was probably Frau Rüster’s faith combined with Elder Callister’s love and prayers for her that unleashed the powers of heaven that day. Second, regardless of why it came, I’m grateful this manifestation arrived in the presence of two other witnesses and that it came in the manner it did. I’m grateful I didn’t have a

warm feeling about the Book of Mormon some lonely night in the quiet confines of an empty LTM classroom. Let me be specific about this. What I experienced in Frau Rüster's living room was not a simple burning in the bosom. What we experienced was an outside presence that entered the room and filled it to overflowing. That it filled us, too, was inevitable. But because two other people were present and felt the intense power that I felt, I've never been able to talk myself out of the fact that it happened. I've never been able to convince myself that it was all just in my head—that I imagined it. No, Frau Rüster and Elder Callister have prevented that. My companion's exclamation as we walked to our bikes has been very significant to me. And so was Frau Rüster's request to be baptized. Those reactions convince me that my sometimes vivid imagination wasn't very vivid that day. This was the most real thing I've ever experienced.

I've often wondered why was I favored to have such an experience when others who pray faithfully for a sure witness find the heavens firmly closed. I don't know. Maybe most of us need a Frau Rüster. I certainly did. In fact, I'm reasonably sure, given what I know about myself and my particular bag of experiences and weaknesses, that without this overwhelming witness I would probably not be active in the Church today, perhaps not even a member. So I'm grateful for this tender mercy from heaven and for its timing.

Testimonies, of course, come in many ways, shapes, and sizes. Most often they probably come as a quiet feeling of confirmation and grow over time. Sometimes, for some reason, they seem not to come at all. But now and then, they come suddenly and with overwhelming force, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with receiving this sort of witness. If God grants it, why should I be ashamed of it or suggest that others can't have a similar experience? At least because of this encounter I understand the difference between the whisperings of the Spirit and the "power of the Holy Ghost" (Moro. 10:4), and the difference, to me, is both immense and important.

When I say I know, I don't mean that I know I had a burning feeling within. What I mean is that I know with perfect certainty the truth about something central to Mormonism. I know that Joseph Smith saw God the Father and his beloved Son. Historians may squabble over the details of the story and the differences between Joseph's various accounts. But I'm no historian. I don't know how factual all the details are. All I know is that his story, the canonized version he recorded in 1838, is accurate enough for God to endorse it as truth. This I know. I know. I know.

Now, let me conclude with a disclaimer. This witness doesn't qualify me for any great blessings beyond those directly associated with its reception. It certainly doesn't make me a better Christian than the least of those who harbor sincere doubts. Many who wish they knew but don't are far more likely to be exalted in the celestial kingdom than I am. This experience marks the beginning of my path, not the end. But it has kept me from wandering off and getting lost. It has also provided me with perspective. The questions surrounding Joseph Smith and the work he started are both numerous and troubling. I acknowledge that. I don't know the answers to very many of them. Some things I just have to put on the shelf for now. I really have no choice. Just because Joseph Smith and the Church he helped restore were and are not perfect doesn't mean they are not true. They don't have to be perfect to be true.

Notes

1. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972 printing), 361.

2. Clyde Parker and Brent Miller, "Dialogues on Science and Religion," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8, nos. 3/4 (Autumn/Winter 1973): 104.

3. Robert C. Fletcher, "One Scientist's Spiritual Autobiography," *Sunstone*, September 1985, 35.

4. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 199.

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ROGER TERRY is senior associate editor at *BYU Studies*. He spent seven years as a senior editor at the *Ensign* and *Liahona* and in a former life was a faculty member at BYU's Marriott School of Management. Roger has had five books published, including *Executioner* (Springville, Utah: Cedar Fort, 2005), a courtroom drama that received an honorable mention in the 2005 novel contest sponsored by the Association for Mormon Letters. He has three other book projects in various stages of completion. Roger lives in Orem, Utah, with his wife, Sheri, and their four children.

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Allan West

The American-born Allan West has become widely respected for his pursuit of a traditional form in Japan. Raised in Washington, D.C., Allan served in the Okayama Japan mission during the early 1980s. In 1987, he returned permanently to Japan to pursue his art because he found that the Japanese attitude toward nature accorded more closely with his own sentiments. He and his wife and their three children live in Tokyo, where they are active members of an LDS ward.

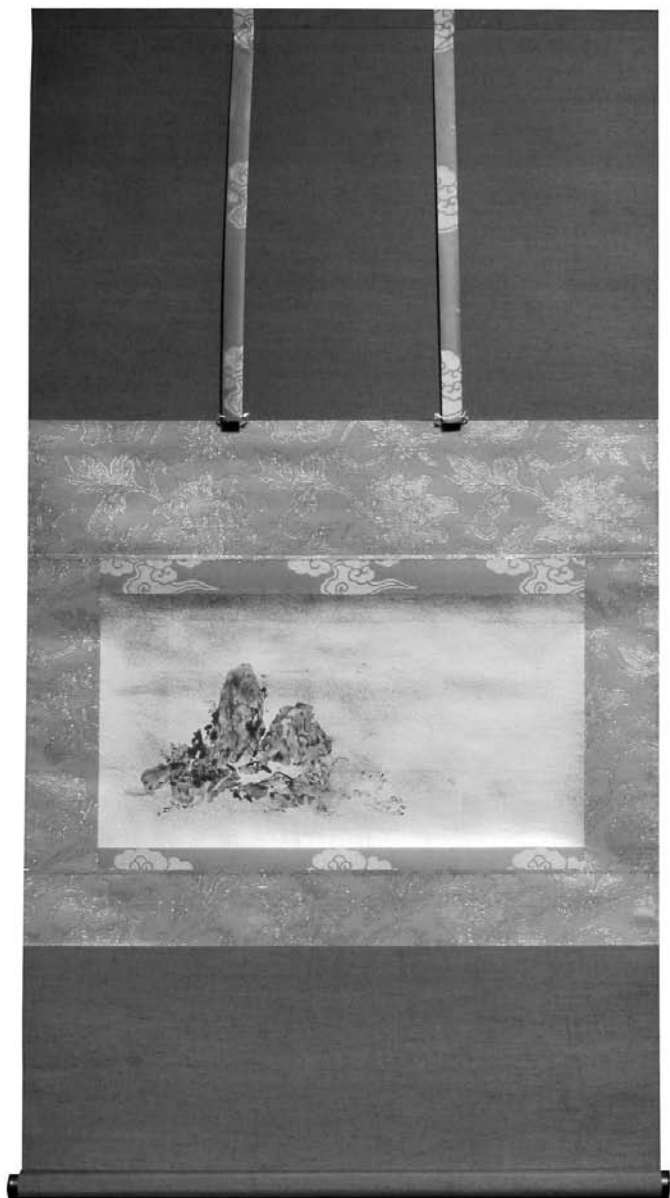
Allan graduated from Tokyo University of the Arts in 1992 with an MFA degree. While there he developed skills in a traditional *nihonga* style of painting, whose mineral pigments and gold and silver leafing he preferred “because of their inherently natural origins and because of their fluid responsiveness to my brush.” For a time he remained baffled by the problem of giving a three-dimensional effect to his paintings. He found a solution in another Japanese art medium, the *byobu*, the traditional Japanese folding screen, formerly used to partition rooms for the sake of privacy. Ironically, screen painting was a nearly forgotten art, and he had to teach himself the techniques through experimentation. The endeavor has proven highly successful. As a visit to his website at <http://www.allanwest.com> will show, his *byobu* paintings, some of them gigantic, have become widely popular. They may be found in many private and public collections and have appeared in a multitude of exhibitions, mostly in Japan and the United States but also in other countries as well.

Predictably, painting is an act of connecting with nature for Allan. As he prepares his materials and mixes his pigments and glues, he has to be mindful of wind, temperature, and humidity. He says that “the act of painting *nihonga* is of necessity being aware of nature. The necessity of being at one with nature in order to paint, is a joy. Because of such a necessity, one’s heart naturally turns to nature as a subject as well.”

Allan prefers not to be categorized according to his religious faith. He writes: “I do believe that as artists, in dealing with things philosophical, we are always informed by our faith. I have found that in consideration of those who are most likely to view my work, I’m never tempted to preach. I’m much more of an animist in the ‘Pearl of Great Price’ sense, and often wonder how we Mormons can treat plants and animals, the groaning earth as we do. If we were to truly live our faith in the uniqueness

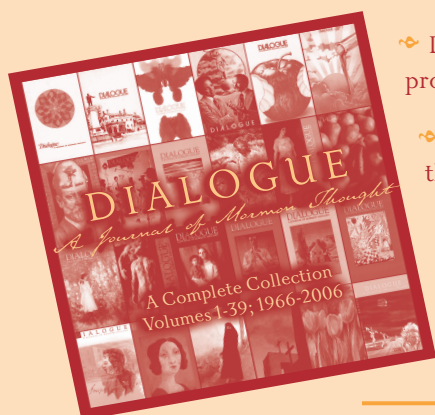
of its perspective on the earth (as a sentient being with a spirit, and plants and animals as sentient beings with spirits following commandments given them) we would lead the world in peaceful, responsible living.”

Front cover: *Autumn Brocade*, 180 cm x 372 cm, gold leaf, silver leaf, mica, coral, malachite, lapis lazuli, cinnabar, natural mineral pigment, deer bone glue binder.



Allan West; *Mount Horai*; gold leaf, mica, deer bone glue binder; on Japanese mulberry paper with silk mounting; 110 cm x 60 cm

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