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FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY • PROVO, UTAH

Title Shattered Glass: The Traditions of Mormon Same-Sex Marriage Advocates Encounter Boyd K. Packer

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Reference *Mormon Studies Review* 23/1 (2011): 61–85.

ISSN 2156-8022 (print), 2156-8030 (online)

Abstract It is asserted that, contrary to what critics claim, the views of an LDS Church leader on homosexuality are consistent with his past public teachings over many years. The reaction of a group that opposes the church's stance on California Proposition 8 is also examined, and arguments in favor of altering LDS teaching on homosexuality are critiqued.

Shattered Glass: The Traditions of Mormon Same-Sex Marriage Advocates Encounter Boyd K. Packer

Abstract: President Boyd K. Packer's October 2010 general conference address met with criticism from people opposed to the stance of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on same-sex marriage and homosexual acts. Critics portrayed President Packer's printed clarification of his words as backing down under pressure. Six of his past addresses are reviewed here, demonstrating that the clarification matches his past teachings. Critics' claims about President Packer's views are also shown to be inconsistent with his published views over many years. The reaction of Mormons for Marriage (M4M), a group of Latter-day Saints dedicated to opposing the church's stance on California Proposition 8, is examined. Despite promising to avoid any criticism of the church and its leaders, M4M is shown to indulge in both. M4M also recommends materials hostile to the church, its leaders, and its standard of morality. Examples of M4M's scriptural and doctrinal justifications of its stance are also examined. The critics' arguments in favor of altering Latter-day Saint teaching regarding homosexual acts are critiqued.

GREGORY L. SMITH

> *There is perhaps no phenomenon which contains so much destructive feeling as "moral indignation," which permits envy or hate to be acted out under the guise of virtue.*
>
> Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself* [1]

"Why do we need prophets today?" While serving in Paris, France, my missionary companions and I liked this question since we had what we thought was a pretty good answer. I never had anyone disagree with it: "Because God loves us as much as he loved his children in times past. And we face questions, challenges, and situations that are different from those of the past, so we need his guidance today."

What our answer did not include, I've since decided, was at least as important: prophets were rarely welcomed, even among the covenant people who paid homage to past prophets or the idea of prophetic guidance (Luke 11:45-54). With relatively few exceptions, prophets were regarded as out of touch, reactionary, pessimistic, and overly critical—a drain on morale, unwilling to read the

1. Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (New York: Rinehart, 1947), 235.

political writing on the wall, obstinately refusing to mince words, avoid hurt feelings, or get with the times. And they were human and mortal, with all the consequent failings and idiosyncrasies that their listeners could not help but notice, especially if they were looking.

In more downcast moments, I could also have told my French friends that even in the latter days this difficulty would remain. A hostile Babylon had, as one might expect, little use for a Palmyra prophet. But even of the relatively few called out into the kingdom, many found a living prophet irksome and ultimately intolerable. This would lead Joseph to say (with an almost-audible sigh):

> But there has been a great difficulty in getting anything into the heads of this generation. It has been like splitting hemlock knots with a corn-dodger for a wedge, and a pumpkin for a beetle. Even the Saints are slow to understand.
>
> I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see some of them, after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions.[2]

Despite nearly two centuries and a far more experienced LDS Church membership, the sound of shattering glass has been heard again. I refer to the church's recent support of California's Proposition 8 and to related issues regarding homosexuality.

An Ideal Test Case?

If nothing else, the religious response to homosexuality would serve as a good illustration for my French investigators. Unlike some modern prophetic counsel—such as the necessary and repeated warnings against drugs, debt, pornography, or domestic abuse—the church's warning against homosexual behavior does not strike a skeptical world as mere "common sense." (My French friends who knew their Voltaire might remark that prophets' warnings against drugs, debt, and the rest are necessary only because "common sense is not very common.")[3] And, granted, these more prosaic matters do not, *in extremis*, likely require prophetic witness to be persuasive. A financial adviser, medical doctor, or social worker would likely say the same.

By contrast, it is difficult to think of a better example of the need for modern prophetic guidance than homosexuality, which has usually been seen as nothing but a dangerous perversion and subversive threat to the social order. Thankfully, recent years have seen at least some of the casual cruelty and unthinking disdain inflicted upon this subset of God's children become less acceptable. Even yet there is clearly work to do—for example, in opposing verbal and physical violence—that no one of goodwill would oppose. And our present broad cultural awareness of the past costs of racism and the exploitation of women, for example, has happily led many to search themselves for other lingering prejudices.

We are now confronted, however, not only with the relatively unobjectionable idea that private behavior between consenting adults in a

2. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 6:184–85; also in Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book 1976), 331 (spelling modernized).

3. "Le sens commun est fort rare." F.-M. Arouet de Voltaire, *Dictionnaire Philosophique Portatif: nouvelle edition avec des notes* (Amsterdam: Varberg, 1765), 2:276. This is a happy case where the English wordplay on *common* improves upon the original.

pluralistic society ought not to be criminalized, but also with some people insisting that society's view and treatment of marriage itself is overdue for extensive modification. Whatever the merits of same-sex marriage, even its staunchest advocates would grant, I think, that this would represent a radical change in Western society. Good and conscientious people have argued persuasively on both sides of the issue from a host of perspectives: ethical, religious, sociological, biological, psychological, and legal. And yet, when all has been argued, the law of unintended consequences must surely have its due. No unaided mortal can say with certainty—or, I suspect, much justified confidence at all—where the proposed redefinition of marriage would ultimately lead us. We cannot predict what the stock market will do in a week or ten years,[4] and yet the advocates of marital change blithely assure us that the far more complex human factors of sociology and history will all work out for the best, say, two generations hence.

Humans often find themselves in such situations, of course. But if marriage is a thing devoutly and properly to be desired by a homosexual couple, then all must grant that it is something of enormous worth and consequence. One does not fight in the courts, the public square, or the streets for a triviality. To deny marriage to the deserving would, then, be cruel; to tamper with and damage it (even with the best of intentions) would be likewise unconscionable.

Furthermore, homosexuality touches numerous deep and vital human matters—it invokes intimacy, self-understanding, belonging, and social role. All the great religious traditions would insist, I think, that these are central issues about which faith is to guide us. Many traditions would see these issues as having both earthly and eternal import. We have, in short, in homosexuality a case tailor-made for demonstrating the benefits of prophetic guidance, if such exists: the stakes are high; both perspectives have ardent, well-meaning proponents; and the pervasive consequences of either choice will be both serious and irrevocable.

President Packer's October 2010 Address

As a result, I have been most interested in the reaction to President Boyd K. Packer's address in the October 2010 general conference.[5] Coming as it did on the heels of a hard-fought campaign in California regarding same-sex marriage, President Packer's speech on sexual morality served as a flashpoint for what nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints would have perhaps called "Gentile" resentment. This much I would have expected, but I have been intrigued and bemused by the reaction and rhetoric of those relatively few members of the church who have chosen to publicly oppose the church's position. A detailed analysis of the social and legal arguments regarding Proposition 8 I leave to others—in part because, as I note above, such advocacy is ultimately inconclusive. I here concern myself with how some among the Latter-day Saints and their allies used President Packer's address to oppose the church and express grievances.

4. Nassim Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (New York: Random House, 2007).

5. Boyd K. Packer, "Cleansing the Inner Vessel," *Ensign*, November 2010, 74–77. As discussed below, the spoken version of the talk was edited to clarify the speaker's intent. I shall refer to the spoken version as "Packer-2010A" and the published, written version as "Packer-2010B." Both the original audio and edited versions are available on the church's website at http://lds.org/general-conference/2010/10/cleansing-the-inner-vessel?lang=eng&media=audio (accessed 5 April 2011).

Various sections of President Packer's address were criticized by both the media and disgruntled Latter-day Saints. One section, however, received the lion's share of the attention:

> Some suppose that they were preset and cannot overcome what they feel are inborn tendencies toward the impure and unnatural. Not so! Why would our Heavenly Father do that to anyone? Remember, He is our Heavenly Father. [Packer-2010A, 9:00–9:20]

Those hostile to the church's legal agenda and religious teachings concluded overwhelmingly that President Packer was teaching that (a) homosexual tendencies, attractions, or temptations were not in-born or innate; and (b) one can always expect to be free of such temptations or desires in this life if one lives the gospel.[6]

This reading led swiftly to complaints that such teaching was at variance with that expressed by the church and other leaders,[7] such as when Elder Dallin H. Oaks noted that "the Church does not have a position on the causes of any of these susceptibilities or inclinations, including those related to same-gender attraction."[8] (It should not escape us that the early and persistent effort to place President Packer beyond the pale of orthodoxy on this point had an added advantage: if one could dismiss some of his remarks as "unofficial" or in error, it would be that much easier to dispense with the rest. If he cannot be trusted to get this detail right, ran the subtext, then his remarks are merely opinion, hardly binding upon members, and evidence that the General Authorities do not agree among themselves.[9] Such a distinction would have little meaning to a nonmember, but to those within the church seeking to discredit President Packer's remarks while retaining their own bona fides as faithful, believing members, such a stance was crucial.)

6. Even in early 2011, Packer-2010A was still being quoted in an op-ed piece by a Mormon "Transhumanist" as an example of "dismissing scientific findings" (R. Dennis Hansen, "Anti-science sentiments among religious leaders and apostasy," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 5 February 2011, http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/opinion/51138147-82/science-evolution-leaders-organic.html.csp). As will be seen, President Packer's talk made no reference to matters about which science can legitimately express an opinion. See also "LDS Church Conference: Being Pro-Gay Marriage Is Like Opposing the Law of Gravity," God Discussion, 4 October 2010, http://www.goddiscussion.com/32994/lds-church-conference-being-pro-gay-marriage-is-like-opposing-the-law-of-gravity/; and Michael Aaron, "Packer says homosexuality second only to murder, denial of Holy Ghost," QSaltLake, 4 April 2011, http://qsaltlake.com/2011/04/04/packer-says-homosexuality-second-only-to-murder-denial-of-holy-ghost/.

7. "Elder Packer is a hardliner on the subject," wrote one commentator. "This is his point of view on the homosexuality issue. He has spoken on it before and believes homosexuality is unnatural. Other general authorities as well as bishops, stake presidents who all are good people and inspired can see this issue differently. . . . So despite what seems like a very hardline by Elder Packer and even tacit approval by the First Presidency, the issue has room for different points of view." Chris, 4 October 2010 (11:38 AM), comment on Laura [Compton], "Why would God allow his children to be born homosexual?," Mormons for Marriage, 3 October 2010, http://mormonsformarriage.com/?p=293.

8. Dallin H. Oaks and Lance B. Wickman, "Same Gender Attraction," interview with Church Public Affairs, 2006, accessed 8 February 2011, http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/official-statement/same-gender-attraction.

9. David Melson, the president of Affirmation, used this tactic explicitly: "Among the twelve (Apostles) there are some that would like to see gays and lesbians welcomed into full fellowship, but Packer is not one of them." Melson was further characterized as claiming that "the general authorities he has spoken with oppose Packer's views" since "there's almost a uniform opinion among the general authorities that full acceptance is going to happen. . . . I'm encouraged, but the church does not move quickly on these things" (Aaron, "Packer says homosexuality second only to murder"). Contrary to Melson's assertion, President Packer has never advocated that those with homosexual inclinations not be "welcomed into full fellowship." No LDS Church leader has taught, however, that "full acceptance" requires that the church allow a member's decision to engage in homosexual acts to go unaddressed. "There is a difference between what one *is* and what one *does*. What one is may deserve unlimited tolerance; what one does, only a measured amount." Boyd K. Packer, *The Things of the Soul* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997), 83 (emphasis in original); see also Boyd K. Packer, "Covenants," *Ensign*, November 1990, 84–86.

Whether their initial reading was accurate is, of course, the first question we must address. The church's official spokesman announced following the conference that "each speaker has the opportunity to make any edits necessary to clarify differences between what was written and what was delivered or to clarify the speaker's intent. President Packer has simply clarified his intent."[10] One might expect that the church's announcement that President Packer had been misunderstood would reassure. The print version read:

> Some suppose that they were preset and cannot overcome what they feel are inborn temptations toward the impure and unnatural. Not so! Remember, God is our Heavenly Father. [Packer-2010B]

Far from settling concerns, those hostile to the church's stance crowed that this was simply evidence that their outcry and pressure had made someone back down: "If the church thought this would soften their words, I think they will find it will backfire, again," wrote one.[11] Some compared the clarification to "rewriting reality," a reference to the remaking of history in Orwell's 1984.[12] (Commentators did not, however, explain how a public announcement to the media was intended to hide the alteration—especially when the original audio remains readily available on the church's website. Evil conspiracies are not usually this clumsy.)

10. Scott Taylor, "Mormon church clarifies intent of President Boyd K. Packer's talk," *Deseret News*, 8 October 2010, http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700072230/Mormon-church-clarifies-intent-of-President-Boyd-K-Packers-talk.html.
11. James, 8 October 2010 (2:13 PM), comment on "Edits to Boyd K. Packer's talk," Mormons for Marriage, 7 October 2010, http://mormonsformarriage.com/?p=299.
12. Molly, 8 October 2010 (10:17 AM), and Phoug, 8 October 2010 (7:01 AM), comments on "Edits to Boyd K. Packer's talk."

The aforementioned initial reading of President Packer's remarks is certainly a possible one. CNN described him as saying that "any attraction between people of the same sex can—with enough faith—be changed," and noted that "when the LDS Church first posted the transcript of Packer's speech, critics went wild—saying the transcript didn't match his spoken words, that the words were changed to lessen the insult."[13] As it happens, however, President Packer has an extensive publication record on homosexuality—and, as we will now see, the edited version of his conference talk matches precisely what he has always taught. Far from backpedaling, the edited version is a smooth continuation of principles that he has taught for over thirty years.

Past and Present Teachings

There are at least six talks in which President Packer has addressed homosexual or other sexual sin.[14] I here highlight several themes that directly contradict the interpretation by critics—both within and outside of the church—of the 2010 conference address. These themes also confirm that the clarification was precisely that—a clarification—rather than a recantation made under

13. Jessica Ravitz, "Mormon leader's remarks spark outcry on same-sex issues," CNN Belief Blog, 12 October 2010 (10:19 AM), http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2010/10/12/mormon-leaders-remarks-spark-outcry-on-same-sex-issues/?hpt=T2.
14. In the discussion that follows, I will denominate each talk "Packer," followed by the date of delivery: Packer-1978, Packer-1990, etc. In all cases, italics are in the original and any bold emphasis has been added by me. The talks are [1] "To The One," address given to twelve-stake fireside, Brigham Young University, 5 March 1978, reprinted in *That All May Be Edified* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 186–200 [Packer-1978]; [2] "Covenants," *Ensign*, November 1990, 84–86 [Packer-1990]; [3] "The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness," *Ensign*, November 1995, 18–21 [Packer-1995]; [4] "Ye Are The Temple of God," *Ensign*, November 2000, 72–74 [Packer-2000]; [5] "'The Standard of Truth Has Been Erected,'" *Ensign*, November 2003, 24–27 [Packer-2003]; and [6] "'I Will Remember Your Sins No More,'" *Ensign*, May 2006, 25–28 [Packer-2006].

pressure. Not every talk addresses every theme, but their collective message is unambiguous and unmistakable. When a talk is first cited, I include a quotation in the footnote which justifies my decision to read his remarks as referring, at least in part, to homosexual temptations or acts.

1. It may be necessary to resist such temptation for a lifetime.

Contrary to the claim that Packer-2010A taught that any inclination to homosexual sin could be eliminated, numerous of his past addresses teach that such temptations may persist throughout one's entire life and must be resisted:

- Establish a resolute conviction that **you will resist for a lifetime, if necessary**, any deviate thought or deviate action. Do not respond to those feelings. . . . [I]f they have to be evicted ten thousand times, never surrender to them. . . . No spiritual wonder drug that I know of will do it. The cure rests in following for a long period of time, and thereafter continually, some very basic, simple rules for moral and spiritual health. [Packer-1978][15]
- Some have resisted temptation but never seem to be free from it. Do not yield! Cultivate the spiritual strength to resist—**all of your life, if need be**. [Packer-1990][16]
- You may wonder why God does not seem to hear your pleading prayers and erase these temptations. When you know the gospel plan, you will understand that the conditions of our mortal probation require that we be left to choose. That test is the purpose of life. While these addictions may have devoured, for a time, your sense of morality or quenched the spirit within you, it is never too late. **You may not be able, simply by choice, to free yourself at once from unworthy feelings**. You can choose to give up the immoral expression of them. [Packer-1990]
- How all can be repaired, we do not know. **It may not all be accomplished in this life**. [Packer-1995][17]
- That may be a struggle from which you will **not be free in this life**. [Packer-2000][18]

Even the initial form of Packer-2010A makes the intended meaning clear in context. Immediately after the citation that caused such consternation, President Packer went on to say, "Paul promised that 'God . . . will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it' (1 Corinthians 10:13)" [Packer-2010A and -2010B]. The appeal to Paul makes it clear that when Packer-2010A refers to those who believe that they "cannot overcome what they feel are inborn tendencies toward the impure and unnatural," he is talking about sinful acts, rather than the existence or persistence of temptation to sin, which we must sometimes

15. "I speak to those few, those very few, who may be subject to homosexual temptations" (p. 187).
16. "My message is to you who are tempted either to promote, to enter, or to remain in a life-style which violates your covenants and will one day bring sorrow to you and to those who love you. . . . Among them [spiritually destructive life-styles] are abortion, the gay-lesbian movement, and drug addiction" (p. 84).
17. "Save for those few who defect to perdition after having known a fulness, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no offense exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness. . . . There are some transgressions which require a discipline which will bring about the relief that comes with the morning of forgiveness. If your mistakes have been grievous ones, go to your bishop. . . . We cannot, as a church, approve unworthy conduct or accept into full fellowship individuals who live or who teach standards that are grossly in violation of that which the Lord requires of Latter-day Saints" (pp. 19, 20).
18. "With some few, there is the temptation which seems nearly overpowering for man to be attracted to man or woman to woman" (p. 73).

simply "bear." He goes on: "There is also an age-old excuse: 'The devil made me do it.' Not so! He can deceive you and mislead you, but he does not have the power to force you or anyone else to transgress or to keep you in transgression" [Packer-2010A and -2010B].

President Packer also invoked the same scriptural argument in Packer-2000:

> When any **unworthy desires press into your mind, fight them, resist them, control them** (see James 4:6–8; 2 Ne. 9:39; Mosiah 3:19). The Apostle Paul taught, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13; see also D&C 62:1).

Thirty-three years ago, Elder Packer drew a frank analogy between those engaged in the difficult process of breaking from same-sex behavior and a major surgical operation to correct a life-threatening condition. As always, he focused on behavior since "the solution to this problem rests with the 'thou shalts' and the 'thou shalt nots'":

> [Surgical patients] count it quite worthwhile to submit to treatment, however painful. They struggle through long periods of recuperation and sometimes must be content with a limited life-style thereafter, in some cases in order just to live. Is it not reasonable that recuperation from this disorder might be somewhat comparable? [Packer-1978]

In the same talk, he noted that his audience "will have to grow away from [their] problem with undeviating—notice that word—undeviating determination." Since the situation is compared to a patient who might have to accept "a limited life-style thereafter . . . in order just to live," and this requires "undeviating determination," it is hard to believe that the same speaker believes (as the critics claim) that temptation and inclination will necessarily cease. On the contrary, President Packer's earlier writings are completely congruent with the clarifying edits made to Packer-2010B and his intent in the context of Packer-2010A.

2. Acting on sexual temptation is not inevitable.

- It is not unchangeable. It is not locked in. One **does not just have to yield to it and live with it**. . . . If you are one of the few who are subject to this temptation, do not be misled into believing that you are a captive to it. That is false doctrine! . . . You have a God-given right to be free and to choose. **Refuse the unnatural; choose the moral way**. You will know, then, where you are going. Ahead is but the struggle to get there. Do not try merely to discard a bad habit or a bad thought. Replace it. [Packer-1978]
- A tempter will claim that such impulses cannot be changed and **should not be resisted**. [Packer-1990]
- If you consent, the adversary can take control of your thoughts and lead you carefully toward a habit and to an addiction, convincing you that immoral, unnatural **behavior** is a fixed part of your nature. [Packer-1995]
- The angels of the devil convince some that they are born to a life from which they cannot escape and are **compelled to live in sin**. The most wicked of lies is that

they cannot change and repent and that they will not be forgiven. That cannot be true. They have forgotten the Atonement of Christ. [Packer-2006][19]

Temptation does not lead inevitably to acts, and all six talks emphasize that experiencing temptation is not sin, as outlined below.

3. Unsought feelings, thoughts, or temptations are not sins—immoral acts and encouraging such acts are.

- Is sexual perversion wrong? There appears to be a consensus in the world that it is natural, to one degree or another, for a percentage of the population. Therefore, we must accept it as all right. . . . The answer: It is not all right. It is wrong! It is not desirable; it is unnatural; it is abnormal; it is an affliction. **When practiced**, it is immoral. It is a transgression. [Packer-1978]
- You **may not be able, simply by choice**, to free yourself at once from unworthy feelings. You can choose to give up the **immoral expression** of them. [Packer-1990]
- We cannot, as a church, approve **unworthy conduct** or accept into full fellowship individuals who **live or who teach** standards that are grossly in violation of that which the Lord requires of Latter-day Saints. [Packer-1995]
- With some few, there is the temptation which seems nearly overpowering for man to be attracted to man or woman to woman. . . . **If you do not act on temptations, you need feel no guilt**. [Packer-2000]
- In the Church, one is **not condemned for tendencies or temptations**. One is held accountable for transgression. (See D&C 101:78; A of F 1:2.) **If you do not act on unworthy persuasions**, you will neither be condemned nor be subject to Church discipline. [Packer-2003][20]
- If you are bound by a habit or an addiction that is unworthy, you must stop conduct that is harmful. Angels will coach you, and priesthood leaders will guide you through those difficult times. . . . You can, if you will, **break the habits** and conquer an addiction and come away from that which is not worthy of any member of the Church. [Packer-2010B]

President Packer has also emphasized that the causes of such temptations are not known to church leaders, and he cautioned against believing there is any "quick fix." Significantly, and contrary to the critics' interpretation, he also endorses the idea that one may inherit a tendency to such acts and dismisses the idea that most people consciously choose homosexual temptation:

4. There is no quick fix, and the causes are not usually known.

- **I do not know of any quick spiritual cure-all** . . . [to] instantly kill this kind of temptation—or any other kind, for that matter. [Packer-1978]

19. "Challenges of pornography, gender confusion, immorality, child abuse, drug addiction, and all the rest are everywhere. There is no way to escape from their influence. Some are led by curiosity into temptation, then into experimentation, and some become trapped in addiction" (p. 27).

20. "There are words we would rather not say. They describe things that we would rather not think about. But you are inescapably exposed to temptations in connection with fornication, adultery, pornography, prostitution, perversion, lust, abuse, the unnatural, and all that grows from them. . . . Some work through political, social, and legal channels to redefine morality and marriage into something unrestrained, unnatural, and forbidden" (p. 25).

- Psychologists and psychiatrists have struggled for generations to find the cause. Many have searched with resolute dedication and have studied everything that might have a bearing on it—parent-child relationships, **inherited tendencies, environmental influences**, and a hundred and one other things. These things and many, many more remain on the scope. **They either have some important effect on this problem, or they are affected in important ways by this problem**. [Packer-1978][21]
- It is hard to believe that any individual would, by a clear, conscious decision or by a pattern of them, **choose** a course of deviation. **It is much more subtle than that**. [Packer-1978]
- We receive letters pleading for help, asking why should some be tormented by desires which lead toward addiction or perversion. They seek desperately for some logical explanation as to why they should have **a compelling attraction, even a predisposition**, toward things that are destructive and forbidden. Why, they ask, does this happen to me? It is not fair! They suppose that it is not fair that others are not afflicted with the same temptations. They write that **their bishop could not answer the "why," nor could he nullify their addiction or erase the tendency**. . . . It is **not likely that a bishop can tell you what causes these conditions or why you are afflicted, nor can he erase the temptation**. But he can tell you what is right and what is wrong. If you know right from wrong, you have a place to begin. That is the point at which individual choice becomes operative. [Packer-1990][22]

And, finally, despite critics' shrill insistence to the contrary, President Packer nowhere teaches that those who succumb to sin should be ostracized, mistreated, or rejected.

5. Those who sin are beloved and not rejected.

- Oh, if I could only convince you that you are a son or a daughter of Almighty God! You have a righteous spiritual power—an inheritance that you have hardly touched. You have an Elder Brother who is your Advocate, your Strength, your Protector, your Mediator, your Physician. Of Him I bear witness. The Lord loves you! You are a child of God. Face the sunlight of truth. The shadows of discouragement, of disappointment, of deviation will be cast behind you. . . . God bless you, the one. You are loved of Him and of His servants. [Packer-1978]
- Now, in a spirit of sympathy and love, I speak to you who may be struggling against temptations for which there is no moral expression. . . . While these addictions may have devoured, for a

21. This paragraph ought to be illuminating for those who claim that President Packer rejects the role of "inherited tendencies," since he offers it as one example of things that have an import effect *on* the problem. (I presume that inherited tendencies would not be thought to be affected *by* the problem, except in time-travel science fiction.) Again, it is clear that his concern and emphasis is acts, rather than temptation, orientation, or desires.

22. Contrast this statement with the mind reading of one former member: "Elder Packer has been itching to give this speech for years and he has had plenty of time to figure out how to succinctly say that Same Sex Attraction isn't a choice." Dave Hoen, 6 October 2010 (3:02 PM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?" Far from "itching to give this speech for years," President Packer *has* given this speech for years—and he has always insisted that the choice lies in how one responds to the temptation.

time, your sense of morality or quenched the spirit within you, it is never too late. [Packer-1990]

- Pure Christian love, the love of Christ, does not presuppose approval of all conduct. Surely the ordinary experiences of parenthood teach that one can be consumed with love for another and yet be unable to approve unworthy conduct. [Packer-2000]
- We understand why some feel we reject them. That is not true. We *do not* reject you, only immoral behavior. We *cannot* reject you, for you are the sons and daughters of God. We *will not* reject you, because we love you. [Packer-2003]

In sum, the critics ask us to believe something quite extraordinary—that President Packer chose to alter his teaching and perspective, expressed for over thirty years, only to be forced after the fact to censor himself because of pressure from the public or displeasure from his apostolic colleagues for violating the current "party line."

Mormons for Marriage

Critics outside the church would be unlikely to know of President Packer's consistency of message on these points. But one might expect that believing church members would give an apostle the benefit of the doubt. And wouldn't they likely be better informed—or have the means to become so?

Mormons for Marriage (hereafter M4M) was founded to "support . . . marriage equality for all, and stands in respectful opposition to California Proposition 8." Laura Compton of California manages the group's website, has been described as its "founder" or "co-founder,"[23] and has apparently often acted as spokesperson for the group.[24] The website does not describe other officers of the group or how it is governed. One of the group's goals is "to share our perspectives on both homosexuality and gay marriage with other Mormons who are meaningfully exploring the issue for the first time."[25] M4M expends considerable intellectual effort on such questions—the website was quick to post a critical text analysis of the differences between Packer-2010A and -2010B.[26] Laura Compton also excerpted all references to homosexuality in the church's new administrative handbooks.[27] Yet it is curious that despite its pretensions to providing an informed and "respectful"[28] discussion of such issues, M4M ignores President Packer's extensive past teaching on the subject when glossing 2010A, though it is all readily accessible. "Many listeners got the distinct impression," Compton tells us, "that

23. Joanna Brooks, "Pro-Gay Marriage Mormon Keeps Faith Despite Church Pressure," Religion Dispatches, 18 February 2011, http://www.religiondispatches.org/dispatches/joannabrooks/4265/pro-gay_marriage_mormon_keeps_faith_despite_church_pressure/; and Jennifer Dobner, "Interfaith leader calls gay marriage legal issue," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 28 September 2010, http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/home/50068662-76/marriage-church-gaddy-gay.html.csp.
24. See, for example, "Atheists United Standing with Mormons for Marriage," accessed 19 February 2011, http://www.atheistsunited.org/home/press-releases/116-atheists-united-standing-with-mormons-for-marriage; Karen Grigsby Bates, "Mormons Divided On Same-Sex Marriage Issue," *National Public Radio (NPR)*, 3 November 2008, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=96405866; Seba Martinez, "AP Story Features Mormon Supporter of Marriage Equality," Affirmation, 6 October 2008, http://www.affirmation.org/news/2008_057.shtml; and Diana Samuels, "Memorial held for gay Mormon who committed suicide in Los Altos," *San Jose Mercury News*, 26 February 2010, http://www.rickross.com/reference/mormon/mormon680.html.
25. Admin, "About," post to Mormons for Marriage, 16 July 2008, http://mormonsformarriage.com/?page_id=2.
26. "Edits to Boyd K. Packer's talk," post to Mormons for Marriage, 7 October 2010.
27. Laura [Compton], "Latest LDS Instructions on GLBT Issues," post to Mormons for Marriage, 12 November 2010 (2:49 PM), http://mormonsformarriage.com/?p=395.
28. Admin, "About," post to Mormons for Marriage, 16 July 2008.

Elder Packer was suggesting homosexuality is a choice. While that may be what he believes or understands, it is not in line with current church teachings which indicate General Authorities do not know what causes homosexuality."[29] Many may well have had such an impression—helped, it must be said, by relentless insistence on that reading by Compton and others:

> You know, we can sit here and debate until the cows come home about whether or not Elder Packer meant to single out gays/lesbians in his talk, but that's not really what matters.
>
> Whether or not he intended to single out people, many got the message that he did so intend.
>
> As a teacher, he should know that if students are not understanding the lessons, it is the teacher's fault and responsibility to fix the problem.[30]

All teachers certainly have the responsibility to be clear. Compton ignores, however, that a hostile reading can often manufacture grounds for offense. Anyone with any experience knows that people often hear what they want to hear—and nowhere is this more true than when being told that their behavior must change. In the case of Packer-2010A, even when a clarification *was* made, the "students" still didn't accept this as a clarification of initial intent at all, but as evidence that President Packer was out of step with his colleagues and acting the "hardline" role. M4M still isn't happy with the talk, in either version. If listeners did misunderstand, one might expect a group with M4M's stated objectives to help calm fears by analyzing President Packer's past remarks. But it didn't.

M4M announces on its website that "no criticism of the church or its leadership will be tolerated."[31] The site uses a moderation system so posts cannot be read until approved by Compton or another administrator.[32] Thus, M4M exercises complete control over what appears on its site and has the control to refuse to publish material that it regards as unsuitable.

It is understandable—and even praiseworthy—that a group that purports to speak for believing members of the church, and wishes to persuade other members, would establish such a rule. But as I read what Compton and her fellow contributors wrote, I found it increasingly hard to regard this "rule" as anything more than a fig leaf to draw in the unwary, or as a sop to any conscience that might be unnerved by an attack on the church or its leaders. M4M "tolerates" such statements as Compton's insistence that "the Church definitely has a long, LONG way to go."[33] This strikes me as criticism. It certainly isn't praise, nor is her claim that the church is "trying to impose LDS moral standards on the rest of the community."[34] These are not isolated slips; the

29. Laura [Compton], 8 October 2010 (7:53 AM), comment on "Edits to Boyd K. Packer's talk."
30. Laura [Compton], 15 October 2010 (9:51 PM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"
31. Admin, "Welcome to Mormons for Marriage," post to Mormons for Marriage, 16 July 2008.
32. Compton, 11 October 2010 (1:22 PM), comment on "Edits to Boyd K. Packer's talk"; see also "We would like to remind readers that comments are moderated and that civil debate is both expected and required," introduction to "Why I Supported Prop 8," Mormons for Marriage, 18 January 2011 (2:47 PM), http://mormonsformarriage.com/?p=432.
33. Laura [Compton], 13 November 2010 (9:58 AM), comment on "Latest LDS Instructions on GLBT Issues."
34. Compton, 11 October 2010 (1:22 PM), comment on "Edits to Boyd K. Packer's talk." I here defer discussing the fact that virtually all law involves the imposition of some moral standard. Advocating for either "yes" or "no" on Proposition 8 requires the assumption of a moral stance and the desire that it be implemented. Even the claim that one should not impose one's morality on others is an attempt to make one's own moral beliefs normative.

church's error, evil, or corruption is a recurrent theme that goes unmoderated or uncontested by Compton, who is praised for "standing up against the Church of LDS' lies about our GLBT friends, fellow citizens and fellow believers."[35] "Laura is my prophet today," writes another.[36] But as for the church:

- "The LDS Church will never give homosexuals an equal status."[37]
- "Homosexuality is not a crime, and God doesn't condemn it."[38]
- "Most [gays] will decide it [the church and its teachings] is all b.s. and will finally come to their senses and leave before that point."[39]
- "There are many accepting, welcoming and affirming churches. Walk away from the bigotry [in the LDS faith] and into the arms of kindness. As Laura points out, there is no need to remain where one is degraded."[40] [This was the last post on the thread; Compton did nothing to correct or moderate this interpretation.]
- "The church shouldn't have gotten involved in [Prop 8]."[41]
- "The church is not inspired. The Book of Mormon is not true. (I left the church a year ago because I found the Book of Mormon to be completely false.) And now I see this ridiculous gay/lesbian issue being raised—it is exactly what I would expect from a false church. It's a repeat from the church's anti-black garbage. When will people learn the truth?"[42]

Readers are assured by Compton, furthermore, that at M4M "we avoid personal attacks."[43] Avoiding personal attacks and not tolerating attacks on church leaders apparently do not encompass such remarks as the following (all made on threads in which Compton—who apparently has full moderating powers—participated):

- Packer's statement is "laughable and pure hypocrisy"; "That statement by Elder Oaks is extremely disingenuous. . . . Probably not a good example of honesty."[44]
- Packer "not so very long ago, advocated for beating up gay people"; "If President Packer is a prophet, I'm the Queen of Sheba, a prima donna at the Metropolitan Opera and an astronaut."[45]
- Packer's talk puts "fear in people's hearts . . . [and] achieves nothing but rigid, paralyzed spirits. Whatever light that is intermingled is quic[k]ly snuffed out with the dark thoughts being promoted."[46]

35. Fiona, 4 October 2010 (9:55 AM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"
36. Claire, 3 October 2010 (7:46 PM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"
37. CowboyII, 13 November 2010 (9:46 AM), comment on "Latest LDS Instructions on GLBT Issues."
38. Anon for now, 14 October 2010 (11:35 PM), comment on "An answer to prayer," Mormons for Marriage, http://mormonsformarriage.com/?p=383. The author self-identifies as bisexual and indicates that God wanted her to be in a same-sex relationship with another woman.
39. Dave Hoen, 3 October 2010 (1:16 PM), comment on "LDS Church Response to HRC," Mormons for Marriage, http://mormonsformarriage.com/?p=378.
40. Fiona, 15 November 2010 (9:47 AM), comment on "LDS Church Response to HRC."
41. Heather, 8 October 2010 (1:48 PM), comment on "Edits to Boyd K. Packer's talk."
42. Chris, 5 October 2010 (10:24 AM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"
43. Laura [Compton], 4 October 2010 (9:55 PM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"
44. Dave Hoen, comment on "Edits to Boyd K. Packer's talk," 8 October 2010 (11:00 AM); and comment on "Two Decades of Mixed-Orientation Marriages," Mormons for Marriage, 19 January 2011 (7:54 PM), http://mormonsformarriage.com/?p=427.
45. Fiona, 5 October 2010 (3:07 PM); 7 October 2010 (2:22 PM), comments on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"
46. Sheri, 8 October 2010 (4:30 PM), comment on "Edits to Boyd K.

- Packer "reinforced prejudice and discrimination of LGBT people. I find that to be morally wrong and unworthy of anyone claiming to be a true follower of Christ['] s teachings and philosophy."[47]
- "Christ can't talk to President Packer or anyone else if they won't open their hearts to the possibility that their own deeply held opinions are not correct."[48]
- "I am not really interested in reading another shame-based talk by Elder Packer. . . . It is unfortunate that when Elder Packer is given this topic to talk about his words are so rife with negativity and shame."[49]
- Those who support the church's stance are told, "Words like yours (and Elder Packer's) are why five young people killed themselves last week."[50]
- "I visciously [*sic*] hope that the next young man who cannot be stopped from killing himself does it on Boyd K. Packer's front steps."[51]
- "The leadership seems more vested in their and the Church's image than the countless young members who wanted nothing more than to feel loved, accepted and whole and relief and found death their only option."[52]
- "You can bet that Boyd Packer's speech will bring about many additional suicides of young Mormons. If God judged us not on our good works but instead on how much sorrow we've brought into the world, I have no doubt that Boyd K. Packer and a few others of the Twelve would be cast into the deepest darkest depths of Outer Darkness."[53]

Compton cautions new members that "we do not call into question the righteousness or membership standing of other posters."[54] But even this protection is denied to apostles, as the above citations (and many others) demonstrate—including a long satire in which President Packer's "To Young Men Only" talk about masturbation was lampooned.[55]

One poster went so far as to associate President Packer with Matthew 18:6/Mark 9:42/Luke 17:2: "Bro Packer caused me considera[bl]e pain and self loathing because of [t]he philosophies mingle[d] with scripture. . . . Bro Packer . . . may just have a millstone waiting for him." The author concluded magnanimously, "But that will be God's decision."[56] More often than not, however, the posters at M4M do not feel the need to defer judgment to a later day or higher court, while the moderators apparently do not enforce their stated policy of avoiding personal attacks and refraining from criticism of the church or its leaders.

Packer's talk."

47. Debbi, 13 October 2010 (4:11 PM), comment on "Edits to Boyd K. Packer's talk."
48. Melody, 3 October 2010 (6:58 PM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"
49. Benjamin, 3 October 2010 (10:53 PM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"
50. Fiona, 4 October 2010 (9:55 AM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"
51. Buck Jeppson, 4 October 2010 (12:09 PM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"
52. Rob, 23 October 2010 (2:51 AM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"
53. Dave Hoen, 4 October 2010 (5:11 PM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"
54. Laura [Compton], 4 October 2010 (9:55 PM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"
55. Bitherwack, 5 October 2010 (12:45 PM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"
56. Rob, 23 October 2010 (2:51 AM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"

At one point in the discussion, Compton did intervene to chastise a poster. The poster had made remarks in favor of the church but had typed part of her message in all capital letters, to which Compton replied: "Stop shouting. Not only is it rude and irritating, it makes it harder for people to read."[57] At M4M, violations of netiquette are rude and merit reproof, but attacks on the apostles do not get quite the same attention, notwithstanding M4M's stated policies

Preaching to the Choir?

One should also not mistake M4M as an exercise in merely preaching to the choir. Several posters wrote that they were new converts who were delighted to find others who share their doubts about the church's stance on homosexual acts: "I'm so glad to have found this site!" wrote one. "As a pretty new convert to the church, this issue has been one of the hardest things for me to reconcile. As someone who is a big advocate for gay marriage and for my many gay and lesbian friends, I've had a difficult time trying to balance what I believe to be true spiritually and what I believe to be right morally."[58] Another wrote:

> I too am a convert. Ever since joining the church in 2005, the one thing that has plagued my conscience and caused me to question my testimony is the church's stance on homosexuality and gay marriage. . . . I cannot imagine how painful it would feel to have my church tell me that my love for my husband was sinful. How could love ever be a sin? I am so glad to have found this site and to be able to read the thoughts of others who are also supportive of our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters. My sincerest hope is that one day, we can open the minds and hearts of those who are not, so that we may all be allowed to love without fear of persecution.[59]

If the above poster's husband fell in love with her next-door neighbor, she might understand how "love could ever be a sin"—or more accurately, how feelings of love could lead to a sinful act. We note too how quickly teaching that homosexual conduct is sinful becomes "persecution." And at least one member has not missed the implications of M4M's stance and arguments:

> I honestly felt like I could never return to church, that I would strip off my garments and never wear them again. But I realize now, that without people like us, things will never change. We must continue to attend, continue to be strong and faithful members, so that one day, our opinions will be heard. . . . So that one day, one of us, or one of our family members, will be called as a prophet or an apostle, and one day, we can make things right.[60]

After the smoke-screen claim that M4M will not tolerate personal attacks or criticism of the church and its leaders, it was refreshing to have the implications spelled out clearly and forthrightly: the prophets and apostles are wrong and are leading members astray, we need a grassroots movement of "people like us" to change things, and when someone right-thinking is finally called to church leadership, the damage can be undone.

57. Laura [Compton], 5 October 2010 (5:21 PM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"
58. Newconvertkim, 4 October 2010 (1:07 PM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"
59. Angela, 4 October 2010 (2:19 PM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"
60. Emily, 4 October 2010 (8:57 AM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"

Homosexuality and the Priesthood Ban

M4M likes to invoke the "progressive LDS Church members in the 1960s and 1970s [who] had an opportunity to speak out on the denial of priesthood to blacks."[61] This recurrent trope[62] argues that just as the priesthood was withheld from blacks because of cultural bias or prophetic error, and then justified by dubious theology, so too the right to marry (or at least have some worthy sexual outlet) has been wrongly denied to homosexuals. Despite the historical problems that plague it, this analogy seems to be appealing because M4M can appear enlightened while its opponents are cast in the role of racists.

The differences in the two cases outweigh the similarities. As I have demonstrated above at length, it is the homosexual act that has long been of concern to the church and President Packer. The church did not dispute the right of black citizens to constitutional protections and equality; the church has likewise supported non-discrimination legislation for homosexuals.[63] In the case of same-sex marriage, the entire debate is about whether public and social recognition of marriage between the same gender is a right at all.[64] Those critics who harp incessantly on the church's supposed attempt to deny others' "civil rights" make for good sound bites but beg the question spectacularly.

Further imperiling the analogy, whereas Joseph Smith permitted the ordination of some black members,[65] there is, by contrast, no evidence that he or any other prophet or apostle endorsed homosexual acts (despite the dreadful effort of D. Michael Quinn to argue otherwise in *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example*).[66] Scripture is likewise univocal

61. Admin, "About," post to Mormons for Marriage, 16 July 2008.

62. Laura [Compton], 6 October 2010 (2:01 PM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"

63. "The focus of the Church's involvement is specifically same-sex marriage and its consequences. The Church does not object to rights (already established in California) regarding hospitalization and medical care, fair housing and employment rights, or probate rights, so long as these do not infringe on the integrity of the family or the constitutional rights of churches and their adherents to administer and practice their religion free from government interference." Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "The Divine Institution of Marriage," 13 August 2008, http://newsroom.lds.org/article/the-divine-institution-of-marriage. See also Michael Otterson, "Statement Given to Salt Lake City Council on Nondiscrimination Ordinances," 10 November 2009, http://newsroom.lds.org/article/statement-given-to-salt-lake-city-council-on-nondiscrimination-ordinances.

64. In 1963 Hugh B. Brown of the First Presidency said in general conference: "We would like it to be known that there is in this Church no doctrine, belief, or practice that is intended to deny the enjoyment of full civil rights by any person regardless of race, color, or creed. We again say, as we have said many times before, that we believe that all men are the children of the same God and that it is a moral evil for any person or group of persons to deny to any human being the right to gainful employment, to full educational opportunity, and to every privilege of citizenship, just as it is a moral evil to deny him the right to worship according to the dictates of his own conscience. We have consistently and persistently upheld the Constitution of the United States, and as far as we are concerned that means upholding the constitutional rights of every citizen of the United States. We call upon all men everywhere, both within and outside the Church, to commit themselves to the establishment of full civil equality for all of God's children. Anything less than this defeats our high ideal of the brotherhood of man" (in Conference Report, October 1963, 91). In 1969 the First Presidency issued an official statement: "We believe the Negro, as well as those of other races, should have his full constitutional privileges as a member of society, and we hope that members of the Church everywhere will do their part as citizens to see these rights are held inviolate" (*Improvement Era*, February 1970, 70).

65. Newell G. Bringhurst, "Elijah Abel and the Changing Status of Blacks Within Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 12/2 (Summer 1979): 23–31.

66. D. Michael Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996). See Klaus J. Hansen, "Quinnspeak," review of *Same-Sex Dynamics*, by D. Michael Quinn, *FARMS Review of Books* 10/1 (1998): 132–40; and George L. Mitton and Rhett S. James, "A Response to D. Michael Quinn's Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History," *FARMS Review of Books* 10/1 (1998): 141–263. Quinn's effort seems to have fallen "stillborn from the press"; I have not seen its arguments invoked during the Proposition 8 debate. At the least, such an approach has

in condemning same-sex acts,[67] while the use of uniquely LDS scripture to justify the priesthood ban was a relatively late development.[68]

Most telling, however, is the manner in which the priesthood ban and teachings on homosexual acts integrate with Latter-day Saint theology. The priesthood ban was always something of an anomaly. My own review of the matter leads me to agree with Elders Jeffrey R. Holland and Dallin H. Oaks: the rationales and justifications offered for the ban were often "inadequate and/or wrong,"[69] for some sought to "put reasons to [the ban that] turned out to be spectacularly wrong."[70] Still, I cannot help but see these explanations as a backhanded compliment to Latter-day Saint theology and those who offered them. The tendency to push explanations for the ban back to premortal acts (e.g., "less valiant in the pre-existence") illustrates that those who offered such explanations realized there was at least the appearance of injustice. For the Saints, actions matter far more than words. Everyone can repent, no one is predestined to damnation or salvation, and "men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression" (Articles of Faith 1:2). It therefore made little sense to deny a blessing to someone because of an ancestor's act. Thus, aside from confessing that they did not know why the ban was in place (a less-than-appealing apologetic!),[71] one of the few consistent positions available to leaders and members appealed to choices made before birth.[72]

not been widespread.

67. It is doubtful that biblical authors conceptualized sexual orientation as the modern West has done. Same-gender sexual acts are, however, never portrayed in a positive light (see, in context, such scriptures as Genesis 13:13; 18:20; 19:5; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Deuteronomy 23:17; 29:23; 32:32; Judges 19:22; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; Isaiah 1:9; 3:9; 13:19; Jeremiah 23:14; 49:18; Lamentations 4:6; Ezekiel 16:48; Amos 4:11; Zephaniah 2:9; Matthew 10:15; 11:23; Mark 6:11; Luke 10:12; 17:29; Romans 1:27; 9:29; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10; 2 Timothy 3:3; 2 Peter 2:6, 10; Jude 1:7; and Revelation 11:8). At best, advocates of licit homosexual acts could argue that scripture simply does not address the types of relationships they envisage—this would, however, only further highlight the absolute necessity of prophetic guidance on the matter. The scriptural texts would seem, at the least, to put a fairly high burden of proof upon those who argue that such acts carry no moral opprobrium.

68. Latter-day Saint attitudes on this point generally echoed those of contemporaries: "With very little effort one can duplicate the Mormon arguments to the most specific detail from these contemporary non-Mormon sources," and this includes the use of biblical proof texts. Lester E. Bush Jr., "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8/1 (Spring 1973): 15–16; see also pp. 26–27. The use of uniquely LDS scripture to justify the ban dates from B. H. Roberts, *The Contributor* (1885), 6:296–7 (Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine," pp. 34–35; Bush also notes a possible earlier allusion to this idea in 1880 by Erastus Snow in *Journal of Discourses*, 21:370). Bush asks, "Why wasn't the Pearl of Great Price invoked earlier on this matter? Most probably there was no need. The notion that the Negroes were descended from Cain and Ham was initially common enough knowledge that no 'proof' or corroboration of this connection had been necessary" ("Mormonism's Negro Doctrine," p. 36). Following Roberts' work, an explanation based on the Pearl of Great Price was used extensively.

69. Jeffrey R. Holland, interview, 4 March 2006, http://www.pbs.org/mormons/interviews/holland.html.

70. Dallin H. Oaks, interview with Associated Press, *Daily Herald* (Provo, UT), 5 June 1988.

71. Leaders who have indicated they did not know the reason for the ban include Gordon B. Hinckley, "We Stand for Something: President Gordon B. Hinckley," On the Record, *Sunstone* 21/4 (December 1998): 71; Jeffrey R. Holland (see n. 69); Dallin H. Oaks (see n. 70); Boyd K. Packer (see n. 72); Alexander Morrison, quoted in Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 239, citing Alexander Morrison, Salt Lake City local news station KTVX, channel 4, 8 June 1998.

72. President Packer observed: "There have been great things that hit the Church in . . . an effort to destroy it. We have had puzzling things. We had the matter of the priesthood being withheld from a part of the human family. That seemed so inconsistent with the rest of human life and humanity and the doctrines and tolerance. We couldn't figure that out. That's gone now, but why was it there? I'm not sure, but I do know this: it had the effect of keeping us out of [most of Africa] until we were ready and mature enough, and they were ready and mature enough. Looking back it is easy to see things that you don't see looking forward." Boyd K. Packer, "Lessons from Gospel Experiences," new mission presidents' seminar, 25 June 2008, disc 4, track 12, 0:00–0:54.

This dynamic is light-years away from the prohibition of same-sex acts from Genesis to the present. The faith of the Saints centers on the family and a view of the afterlife that necessitates exalted husbands and wives.[73] Commandments against same-sex acts—or against any other sexual act outside the husband-wife relationship—are foundational, never revoked or varied, exhaustively repeated by ancient and modern prophets and apostles, and plainly congruent with broader Latter-day Saint teachings.

Could same-sex acts be accommodated by some later revelation and expanded understanding that M4M clearly hopes will come? In the realm of pure theory, much is possible. But in practice doing so would be a far more radical reconstruction than the ending of the priesthood ban—if anything, lifting the ban *resolved* a long-standing, poorly understood tension in Latter-day Saint practice. A sudden endorsement of same-sex acts would almost surely cause more theological tangles than it would unravel.

I wonder what M4M thinks the appropriate action for blacks in the pre-1978 church should have been. Should they have been encouraged by "progressive members" to ignore the ban and exercise the priesthood functions they had been denied? Should church members have published public denunciations of the prophets? Should the apostles of the 1970s have gotten the President Packer Treatment and been castigated as unchristian, immoral, worthy of damnation, guilty of causing suicides, and all the rest? Even if we grant the extraordinarily dubious contention that the church will one day receive a revelation permitting same-gender marriages and sexual acts, ought those so inclined to take matters into their own hands in the meantime, confident that God will one day justify them? If so, why have prophets at all? If not, then the moral standard—about which every apostle and prophet has been and remains in complete agreement—must be upheld and urged by all members.

Opposition to the Church's Moral Standard

M4M includes links to PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays),[74] whose booklet *Be Yourself* reassures teenagers that they can have a same-sex marriage and adopt children.[75] In addition to PFLAG, Compton and M4M also recommend that readers consult Affirmation,[76] which tells youth that

> we know from experience with [LDS] church leaders that they are hardly in a position to be giving counsel on sexual issues. Their shameful teachings and actions over the years reveals [sic] their willingness to remain ignorant and cover up truth when it comes to homosexuality. There are too many victims and examples to deny this reality."[77]

In a similar vein, Affirmation's pamphlet *For the Strength of Gay Youth* tells Latter-day Saint teens or young adults who engage in homosexual activity that they need to

73. Julie B. Beck, "Teaching the Doctrine of the Family," broadcast to seminary and institute of religion teachers, 4 August 2009; reprinted in *Ensign*, March 2011, 12–17.

74. "Help and Support—General," right sidebar, Mormons for Marriage, accessed 8 February 2011, http://mormonsformarriage.com/.

75. PFLAG, *Be Yourself: Questions & Answers for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Youth*, 17–18, http://community.pflag.org/Page.aspx?pid=594.

76. Laura [Compton], "Come Out, Take Action," post for "National Coming Out Day," Mormons for Marriage, 10 October 2010, http://mormonsformarriage.com/?p=308.

77. "Youth Frequently Asked Questions," Affirmation, accessed 8 February 2011, http://www.affirmation.org/youth/youth_faq.shtml.

> realize that doing something sexual with another person doesn't mean it's the end of the world. Even if you are active in the Church and wish to remain so, life will go on. We are human beings and human beings are sexual beings. God created us this way, so even He understands that humans will be sexual, even at times when they don't expect to be. Regardless of the reason, remember that guilt and shame are useless emotions.[78]

Most church members might agree that shame serves little purpose, but guilt is an exceedingly useful emotion for correcting sin—as M4M and other apologists for licit homosexual acts tacitly acknowledge when they seek to use guilt to induce church members and leaders to "do the right thing."

God made us sexual, so if we act sexually guilt is useless—this is not a robust conclusion. It is so thin that one is tempted to wonder if this is really the best Affirmation could do. God also gave us mouths and speech, but "even so the tongue is a little member . . . [and] a fire, a world of iniquity . . . that . . . defileth the whole body" if it is unbridled (James 3:2, 5–6). It is hard to believe that even Affirmation truly believes that shame and guilt are useless "regardless of the reason"—surely those who, say, beat homosexuals ought to feel shame or guilt. (Not incidentally, those who feel no remorse or guilt are diagnosed as sociopaths. Would Affirmation also affirm that disorder?)

A study of the messages it posts and the resources it recommends quickly makes it clear that M4M's thin end of the wedge is political opposition to the church's involvement in Proposition 8 and (more laudably) opposition to the mistreatment of homosexuals. But that agenda soon morphs into a platform for opposing the church's teachings on the immorality of homosexual acts—whatever the intent of M4M's founders. While the sites recommended have some useful advice for those with homosexual tendencies, and their friends and families, they are not fundamentally friendly to the church's standard of morality. A link to the church's resources on same-sex attraction is conspicuously, if not surprisingly, absent.[79]

M4M also highlighted the story of a man who claims that God answered his prayers, confirmed he was to be homosexual, and guided him to "the man that would become my life partner."[80] Tellingly, this comment was promoted to its own post, which perhaps coincidentally allowed M4M to feature the author's extensive citation from D. Michael Quinn's attack on President Packer's probity, reminding readers that this would let them "make up their own minds as to what this General Authority is really like."[81]

Compton has told the media, "It's not easy when you find yourself on the opposite side of the fence from the men you believe are prophets, seers and revelators. But I don't have to agree with somebody 100 percent in order to sustain them, to recognize their wisdom, to acknowledge them as leaders and assume their good intentions."[82] It

78. Aaron Cloward, *For the Strength of Gay Youth: A Guide for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Mormon Youth and Young Adults*, accessed 2 May 2011, http://www.affirmation.org/youth/for_the_strength.shtml. President Packer has noted, "There are organizations which . . . justify immoral conduct and bind the chains of addiction or perversion ever tighter. Do not affiliate with such an organization. If you have already, withdraw from it" (Packer-1990).

79. Such resources are available at http://providentliving.org/ses/media/articles/0,11275,2875-1---59,00.html (accessed 6 April 2011).

80. Bob25, 14 October 2010 (3:38 PM), comment on "Edits to Boyd K. Packer's talk."

81. Bob25, "An answer to prayer," post to Mormons for Marriage, 14 October 2010, http://mormonsformarriage.com/?p=383.

82. Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Some LDS conservatives now at odds with

is difficult to see much recognition of wisdom or any assumption that President Packer meant well in M4M's posts. (Those who mean well are not usually damned with a millstone around their necks, for example.) There is also little attempt to acknowledge, much less promote, the leadership of the apostles on sexual matters. Materials hostile to the church's teachings on sexual morality are recommended, while church materials are not even mentioned. I wonder how sustained President Packer would feel were he to read what M4M produces under Compton's supervision.

Compton goes on to argue that "scriptures and church history are jampacked *[sic]* with humans who make mistakes, disagree, debate and understand the gospel differently," which is presumably how she rationalizes her activities online and in the media. Yet, I think she will search in vain for any scriptural license to undermine the prophets' teachings on sexual morality or to criticize and malign God's representatives as she and those who follow her have done. But, as we will now see, careful attention to scriptural texts is not one of M4M's strengths.

Wresting the Scriptures

Compton asks readers, "Why would God allow his children to be born homosexual? Because God loves all his children, none is better—or worse—than another. 'And God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.'"[83]

Such a jejune analysis, while perhaps not surprising, is disappointingly thin on logic and scriptural rigor. (As we have seen, President Packer was asking why God would make people unable to resist temptation.) No one disputes that God loves all his children; he is no respecter of persons (2 Chronicles 19:7; Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9; 1 Peter 1:17; Moroni 8:12; D&C 1:35). A reading that implies divine endorsement of homosexual acts, however, must pass too lightly over the fact that creation was declared "very good" *after* the creation of two genders who were given the command to "be fruitful and multiply," but *before* the fall of Adam and advent of a telestial world (Genesis 1:28-31). The context does little to justify homosexual attraction or acts as either directly caused by God or desired by him—unless one argues that Adam and Eve had homosexual desires in Eden. There are innumerable things that God now permits in a telestial world—babies born deformed or mentally handicapped, people with genetic predispositions to violence or alcoholism, Huntington's disease or schizophrenia—that only a sadist or fool would call desirable or "good" as final goals or states.[84] While being thus afflicted is neither a sign that God does not love us nor a cause for moral condemnation, the fact that God permits such states can hardly be used as an endorsement of them. How would Compton react, I wonder, if I suggested that God allows the existence of homophobia—and that it therefore ought to be approved or even encouraged since God loves homophobes just as much as everyone else, and besides, everything that God has made is "very good"? Compton wants to cry that all is not well in Zion and yet ironically insists that all is well in the telestial world—at least as it pertains to sexual orientation.

their church," Salt Lake Tribune, 28 April 2011, accessed 5 August 2011, http://www.sltrib.com/csp/cms/sites/sltrib/pages/printerfriendly.csp?id=51716530.

83. Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"

84. This is not to deny that trials, weaknesses, temptation, or suffering can be used by God to further his good purposes in our behalf. This dynamic is at the heart of the mortal experience: "In his plan, God 'permits' many things of which He clearly does not approve." Neal A. Maxwell, *Lord, Increase Our Faith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994), 43.

Compton elsewhere asks, by analogy, "Because if my heterosexuality is unnatural and sinful, and if it is a central part of who I am and it is always with me, then I am unnatural and sinful and how could God make me unnatural and sinful but make you natural and innocent?"[85]

The question presupposes that God "makes" people homosexual—yet, as Compton often insists, the prophets do not know the cause(s) of homosexual desires. And neither does she. No one does. There are many deviations from the ideal and the norm in a telestial world. God may permit these under the operation of natural law, but it does not follow that he applauds them or decrees their occurrence. We simply do not know.

"How could God make me born blind?" one could ask with equal cogency. To be blind comes not from sin but, as with everything, "that the works of God might be manifest" in the lives of the blind (John 9:3). The cause is irrelevant.[86] The blind man ultimately receives healing and wholeness from Jesus—but Jesus does not respond to his predicament by endorsing blindness as just another kind of equally valued sightedness. There can be no doubt but God and Jesus prefer that the blind have sight—if not now, then in the resurrection (Psalm 146:8; Isaiah 35:5; Matthew 11:5; Luke 4:18; Mosiah 3:5; Alma 40:23; 3 Nephi 17:9). To be blind is a potential tragedy, a trial, a real deprivation that deserves sympathy, support, and reassurance—but not by defining sight as optional (Leviticus 19:14; Deuteronomy 27:18). Nor are the blind exempt from the moral laws that bind us all, even if it is more difficult for them to keep some commandments.[87] And none need feel smug or relieved, for all of us will be painfully "blind" in some way.

Compton insists on conflating acts with one's nature: "I don't become heterosexual by engaging in sex ('or anything like unto it'), my heterosexuality is part of who I am." But when church leaders speak against homosexuality, they are clearly speaking against homosexual *acts*, not an inherited or acquired state of being or desires.[88] Compton is speaking past them. Sadly, M4M seems to usually want to ignore the *behavioral* focus of the church's teachings (but the organization's website links to web resources such as Affirmation and PFLAG that explicitly undermine those teachings). This tendency needlessly obscures one of the great strengths of LDS doctrine: we are not our desires, and our desires can be checkreined and remade through Christ via the exercise of moral agency (2 Nephi 2:26; Moroni 7:12–26).

We would be either naïve or unreflective to conclude that sexuality is the only aspect of ourselves that is both omnipresent and a complicated mix of the exalted and the base. Despite Compton's claim, in LDS theology God didn't make me "natural and innocent" and someone

85. Laura [Compton], 11 October 2010 (9:12 AM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"

86. I here use the metaphor of blindness as a way of gesturing at all sorts of losses, unfulfilled plans, failed longings, promises unrealized, and the universal experience of being a stranger and pilgrim, far from home. This is not an attempt to argue that homosexual desire or any other urge without a moral outlet should be reduced to a model of disease or physical defect (though there may be value in such models for at least some—and some certainly experience it thus, at least in part).

87. For example, the blind might be more tempted to steal because earning a living is more difficult. On the other hand, the blind might be less subject to some temptations (e.g., pornographic magazines probably hold less allure).

88. See Oaks and Wickman, "Same Gender Attraction" (see n. 8); Dallin H. Oaks, "Same-Gender Attraction," *Ensign*, October 1995, 9; Jeffrey R. Holland, "Helping Those Who Struggle with Same-Gender Attraction," *Ensign*, October 2007, 42–45; Bruce C. Hafen, "Elder Bruce C. Hafen Speaks on Same-Sex Attraction," report of address given to Evergreen International annual conference, 19 September 2009, http://newsroom.lds.org/article/elder-bruce-c-hafen-speaks-on-same-sex-attraction.

else "unnatural and sinful." We are all a complex "compound in one," torn by both noble and base desires. Who can trace the origin of the least of these, even in ourselves? I cannot. The natural man is an enemy to God—and always will be unless we yield to Christ's yoke, which both frees and constrains us (Mosiah 3:19; Matthew 11:29–30). And a key aspect of that yielding lies in being "willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him" (Mosiah 3:19)—not a description calculated to promise ease or freedom from frustration. The struggle of the homosexual Christian is a minor-key variation on the major theme that runs through every life's score.

Discipleship

Compton is not alone at M4M in engaging in a tendentious exegesis of Genesis. "Those who would suggest celibacy," rather than homosexual acts, should "read what God & Jehovah thought about that after finding Adam alone in the Garden of Eden," we are told.[89] True, the scripture tells us that "it is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). We learn again that not all conditions that obtain in mortality are desirable or pleasant, but this hardly justifies an abandonment of chastity. As President Packer warned more than three decades ago:

> We can do many things that are very personal, but these need not be selfish. For instance, it need not be a selfish thing to study and improve your mind, to develop your talents, or to perfect the physical body. These can be very unselfish if the motive is ultimately to bless others. But there is something different about the power of procreation. There is something that has never been fully explained that makes it dangerous indeed to regard it as something given to us, for us. [Packer-1978]

The author of this M4M entry has, however, put his finger on an important point. I admire Ronald Rolheiser's formulation enormously:

> There are less obvious manifestations of poverty, violence, and injustice. Celibacy by conscription is one of them. Anyone who because of unwanted circumstance (physical unattractiveness, emotional instability, advanced age, geographical separation, frigidity or uptightness, bad history, or simply bad luck) is effectively blocked from enjoying sexual consummation is a victim of a most painful poverty. This is particularly true today in a culture that so idealises sexual intimacy and the right sexual relationship. The universe works in pairs, from the birds through to humanity. To sleep alone is to be poor. To sleep alone is to be stigmatised. To sleep alone is to be outside the norm for human intimacy and to feel acutely the sting of that. To sleep alone, as Thomas Merton once put it, is to live in a loneliness that God himself condemned [i.e., Genesis 2:18].[90]

This poverty is even sharper for those who can expect no moral consummation of their homosexual desires, and it is brought painfully to the fore in a church whose faith exalts marriage and the family. As Rolheiser goes on to explain,

89. Rob, 23 October 2010 (2:51 AM), comment on Compton, "Why would God allow . . . ?"

90. Ronald Rolheiser, *Seeking Spirituality: Guidelines for a Christian Spirituality for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1998), 199. Rolheiser is a Canadian Roman Catholic priest, member of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

we deceive ourselves if we think that this is a unique or unusual circumstance:

> Once we have accepted that we are fundamentally dis-eased in that nothing in this life will ever fully complete us, we need then give up our messianic expectations and demands. Hence, we must stop expecting that somewhere, sometime, in some place, we will meet just the right person, the right situation, or the right combination of circumstances so that we can be completely happy. We will stop demanding that our spouses, families, friends, and jobs give us what only God can give us, clear-cut pure joy. . . .
>
> [In Gethsemane] we see the necessary connection between suffering and faith, the necessary connection between sweating blood in a garden and keeping our commitments and our integrity. Nobody will ever remain faithful in a marriage, a vocation, a friendship, a family, a job, or just to his or her own integrity without sometimes sweating blood in a garden.[91]

We Latter-day Saints likewise have to work out our own covenant relationship with God and what he communicates through his servants, the prophets, whom we covenant to sustain.[92] This lifelong proposition is another garden where blood will inevitably be sweat out as we individually work out our salvation "with fear and trembling" (Mormon 9:27).

Compton explains that "some of the things [President Packer] said, and the way he said them, were hurtful to GLBT Mormons and their friends and family."[93] Let us cheerfully grant that all ought to avoid every offense as best they can.[94] Yet I wonder if Compton has considered that the attacks, ridicule, and caricature that M4M serves up (and enables) are at least as hurtful to her fellow citizens of the body of Christ, whose apostles are maligned and whose church is relentlessly criticized.

"If we're just going to keep fighting . . . how is that pleasing to God?" she asks in the press.[95] Are we then to conclude that she thinks the behavior on M4M's website is "pleasing to God"? Or that it isn't fighting? We cannot control what others do, but Compton could do her part if she wants fighting to stop—she can simply cease her public disagreement with the prophets and stop lecturing those who choose to agree with them. I, for one, see no reason for prophets to be silent simply because their counsel makes Compton and a few others uncomfortable. Her plea requires that the prophets change their stance and cease to advise—or that she do so. One could be forgiven for mistakenly concluding that she had nothing to do with the fighting at all since she addresses the press as an aggrieved party and voice of conciliation: *If only the fighting could stop! God doesn't like fighting!* As innumerable mothers have pointed out to their own children, it takes two to quarrel.

How are unity and God's purposes achieved by telling the press that she "see[s] a lot of people [in LDS congregations] really sitting back and thinking maybe we do need to have some open

91. Rolheiser, *Seeking Sprituality*, 97, 210.

92. I do not believe that "sustaining" requires that we always agree with apostles and prophets. But it does moderate and modulate what our response to any disagreement will be, and whether or how we might publicize it.

93. Compton, 11 October 2010 (1:22 PM), comment on "Edits to Boyd K. Packer's talk."

94. All of us ought also to refrain from *taking* offense, especially when none is intended. See Neil L. Andersen, "Never Leave Him," *Ensign,* November 2010, 39-41.

95. Martinez, "AP Story Features Mormon Supporter of Marriage Equality" (see n. 18).

hearts and open minds"—with the clear implication that those who disagree with Compton or her agenda (including, but not limited to, the prophets) have closed minds and hearts?[96] The Proposition 8 rhetoric caused "huge rifts in California congregations,"[97] according to her. Should she consider attacks upon and misrepresentation of an apostle as somehow conducive to bridging such rifts?

As a physician, it is often my task to give patients unpleasant news. I have told smoking parents that their habit is responsible for their child's worsening asthma; I have told alcoholics that they must abstain completely or die; I have told stroke victims that they are unsafe to drive; I have told the morbidly obese that their calories are killing them. And, sad to say, despite all the care of which I was capable, and despite all my reserves of charity and compassion, some of these patients have not been grateful for my message. I have told them things they did not wish to hear. They have been hurt, angry, and insistent that I did not know what I was talking about, or they have taken refuge in the claim that they had "always been this way," and so I should leave well enough alone. I had never faced their particular burden, so what did I know? It was not fair that they had a condition that restricted them while others were free.

It would often be much more comfortable for everyone if I were to say nothing, or mouth platitudes, or focus on all the many things that are *not* killing people. But doctors—like spiritual apostolic physicians, I suspect—have duties they cannot shirk. If my patients do not like what they hear, they might choose to remain silent or leave my practice. Likewise, those who differ with the united voice of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve might disagree silently or leave the church. But as long as patients are in my office, I am bound to tell them the truth (no matter how much they argue or resent it or blame me) despite the more pleasant and seductive voices that assure them that all will be well.[98] Mountebanks and quacks in every field always have an easier time of it, for they are not constrained by the cold iron facts of a fallen world.

Although everything in that fallen world is assuredly not "very good," our hands, feet, and eyes surely are. And yet even these treasures must sometimes be abandoned upon the altar:

> Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. (Matthew 18:8–9)[99]

Halt and maimed we all will be, in some way. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross" (Matthew 16:24), said Jesus, who knew a thing or two about crosses. Since Jesus declared that those who "loveth father or mother more than me [are] not worthy of me" (10:37), can we expect that he will make an exception for gay partners? "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy

96. Dobner, "Interfaith leader calls gay marriage legal issue" (see n. 17).

97. Bates, "Mormons Divided On Same-Sex Marriage Issue" (see n. 18).

98. I also, like apostles, have a moral duty to advocate for measures that, in my judgment, best serve public health and well-being—such as universal childhood vaccination—even when passionate voices who would never darken the door of my practice oppose me.

99. This same idea is invoked in Elder Dallin H. Oaks's account of Aron Ralston's decision to sever his own arm. See "Desire," *Ensign*, May 2011, 42.

of me" (v. 38). I appreciate the obvious sympathy that M4M manifests to those who struggle and suffer so profoundly. But what shall it profit a man if he gains a whole world free from guilt, bullying, and cruel talk if he loses his own soul?

"Therefore, What?"—A Postscript

A purely academic review would likely end here. Elder Holland has remarked, however, that President Packer's response to instruction or exhortation is often to ask, "Therefore, what?"[100] I suspect, then, that President Packer would tell me that as an aspiring disciple of the Master, I have a duty to conclude with my own answer to his question, though unlike him I can speak only for myself.

Therefore—Nonmembers who hope that M4M's stance represents the way of the future, or a viable "alternative interpretation" of the Church of Jesus Christ's attitude toward same-sex acts, should prepare themselves for disappointment. The media should realize that M4M's is a fringe approach unlikely to gain traction among believing, practicing members.

Therefore—M4M's founders ought to either apologize and clean up their conduct online and in the media or be honest enough to concede that their behavior is not consistent with their purported aim to publicly oppose the church's political activities while refraining from criticism of the church and its leaders. It is not clear to me that such a goal is feasible; it is, however, abundantly clear that M4M has failed to achieve it. If they intend to continue as at present, they ought at least to have the decency to admit that they *are* criticizing the church and its leaders. The issue is simply one of integrity.

I have mentioned Compton specifically because of her leadership role, media prominence, and willingness to forgo anonymity. Others are at least equally at fault.[101] By our fruits we are known (Luke 6:43–45). With no more authority than accrues to "fellowcitizens with the saints" (Ephesians 2:19; D&C 20:53–54), I urge all who have erred to repent privately and publicly (Mosiah 27:35; D&C 42:90–92), trusting that God will be as merciful to them in their errors as he is to me in mine. If they choose not to, or insist they have done nothing wrong, the proximate and eternal consequences will be tragic, but not unexpected.

Little intellectual or spiritual respect is due the decision to purchase a courtyard, post a sign that reads "Absolutely No Stoning Will Be Tolerated," and then invite all comers to toss their missiles at apostolic targets under cover of pseudonyms or anonymity. I grow even less sympathetic when in the press the same proprietors then bemoan the sudden epidemic of discord, and piously hope it will end soon—especially, we must add, when they inspect each projectile prior to its launch and are at pains to point out that their "no stoning" policy has prevented the use

100. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Teaching, Preaching, Healing," address given at Church Educational System religious educators conference, 8 August 2000; adapted in *Ensign,* January 2003, 37.

101. Elder Neal A. Maxwell wisely observed, "There is such a thing as a subtle mob of bystanders—not a mob that cries aloud, 'Barrabas,' nor a mob that obviously holds the cloak of those who are throwing stones (Matthew 27:21; Acts 7:58). Rather, it is a different kind of mob, one which cleverly goes along with a bad trend and even goads on the activists and egoists, seeming not to care what the wrongdoer does as long as he is smooth and cool. Worse still, such subtle mobs are a collection of silent proxy givers. The onlookers might not actually do themselves what the offender does, but they enjoy the vicarious emotions without sensing any seeming accountability. Moreover, such enablers can then quickly slink away when the apogee of acting out is over." Neal A. Maxwell, *The Promise of Discipleship* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001), 15–16. The anonymity and wide reach of the Internet is well suited to such tactics.

of some heavier or more jagged weapons.[102] Were I to add that the rocks are followed by assurances that Compton and Co. sustain their targets as prophets, seers, and revelators (even without agreeing with them 100 percent), readers might mistake an ironic reality for bad melodrama.[103] Would that it were.

Therefore—members of the church ought not to conclude from the existence and misleading rhetoric of the few at M4M that they are on theologically or spiritually safe ground in winking at, encouraging, or engaging in same-sex behavior. Those drawn to M4M ought to seriously ask themselves and the Lord whether they can in good conscience support an organization that has not scrupled to provide a forum to attack apostles, the church, and its doctrines while claiming this will not be the forum's practice. It bears remembering that those who left the tree of life for Lehi's great and spacious building—which represents "the world and the wisdom thereof" and the "vain imaginations and the pride of the children of men" (1 Nephi 11:35; 12:18)—derided their former fellows but could not typically strike at Jesus directly (8:27–28, 33). Instead, they "gathered together to fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (11:35; see v. 36).

If I were to help stone a man (or hold cloaks while others did so), I hope I would have the gumption to pick up the rock myself and hurl it in the full light of day—and then take the consequences. Ω

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102. "People who cannot moderate themselves will receive assistance from our volunteers"; "There has been an unusual amount of rancor in the discussions this week (and that's only counting what's been reflected by the posts which have made it through the moderation process)." Laura [Compton], 4 October 2010 (9:55 pm), comment on "Why would God allow . . . ?"; Laura [Compton], 11 October 2011 (1:22 pm), comment on "Edits to Boyd K. Packer's talk." Given what made it through moderation (see the section herein titled "Mormons for Marriage"), one wonders what, if any, extremes were excluded. And given that Compton noted the "rancor" and accompanying behavior, why did she permit these if "no criticism of the church or its leadership will be tolerated" (see n. 31 herein)?

103. See note 82 and associated main text.