

The Etiology of Homosexuality^[1] from Authoritative Latter-day Saint Perspectives, 1879-2006

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"For centuries men have sought the cause of this condition. It is an essential step in developing a cure."

Apostle Boyd K. Packer, "To the One", March 5, 1978

"For there is never a proper end to reasoning which proceeds on a false foundation...."
Cicero, *De Natura Deorum (On the Nature of the Gods)*, Book I, Chap. XXXVII

Years before Joseph Smith organized the "Church of Christ" (now the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, LDS or Mormon) on April 6, 1830, Smith claimed special prophetic abilities that gave him access to divine wisdom and knowledge. Smith was the first to be proclaimed as a "Prophet, Seer, and Revelator" for the LDS Church, and thereafter each of Smith's successors to the presidency of the LDS Church has also held that same divinatory title. In addition, every single member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the LDS Church since 1830s has also held those visionary titles (some 92 men in all, as of 2006).^[2] Note that in addition to the traditional scriptures of other Judeo-Christian religions, Mormons also believe in two additional sets of allegedly ancient scripture, *The Book of Mormon* and *The Pearl of Great Price*, and in one set of modern scriptures (mainly revelations from God received by Joseph Smith) called *The Doctrine and Covenants*. In these several hundred pages of additional Mormon revelations that guide the modern church, not only is no causality for homosexuality found, in fact *there is no mention of homosexuality whatsoever* (or archaic terms like sodomy or even the "crime against nature"). This lack of scriptural precedence, ancient or modern, has left the LDS hierarchy hard pressed to come up with a definitive understanding of homosexuality, especially its cause(s) and cure(s). Since as early as 1879, and until as recently as September 2006, they have relentlessly tried, though, to offer to their members an etiology. Over the past fifteen years however, the answer has become more frequently "it is not known", despite the revelatory and divinatory callings of these men within their church.

The spoken and written words of these male priesthood authorities (all of whom have been white and apparently heterosexual as well) when officially published by the church,^[3] are considered by the faithful to be as theologically binding and authoritatively applicable as any ancient scripture, Jewish or Christian. Ironically, bisexually- and homosexually-inclined men have participated in the highest LDS councils since Assistant President of the Church and General in the Nauvoo Legion, John Cook Bennett, gave out military rank to men in the Legion in exchange for sexual favors with him in the 1840s.^[4] However, only twice in the 1800s did an LDS apostle denounce "the crime against nature" over the pulpit; both times offering his prophetic understanding of the etiology of homosexuality as well. In 1879, Apostle George Q. Cannon, a polygamist with seven wives, became the first Mormon authority to proclaim a cause for homosexuality: in his polygamous viewpoint, the "false tradition" of heterosexual monogamy was the culprit; apparently if men were legally and socially allowed multiple female spouses, they would not seek sexual gratification with other males out of boredom with a single wife. Almost twenty years later Cannon again offered "crimes against nature" (by which he clearly meant homosexuality) as being caused by contagion.^[5] Nearly another eighty years went by before another Mormon apostle ventured to divine the etiology of homosexuality in a public (and therefore scripturally-binding) manner.

From 1964 until September 2006, Mormon officials have delivered more than one hundred speeches and published dozens of pamphlets on homosexuality; nearly fifty of those published statements offer a different - and often confusing or even contradictory - cause or causes of homosexuality. As Apostle Boyd Packer stated in 1978, finding "the cause of this condition...is an essential step in developing a cure." Homosexuality is categorically eschewed by Mormonism and doctrinally, homosexuality does not and *cannot* exist. Mormonism proclaims a thoroughly heterosexual god with multiple heterosexual wives (referred to collectively in folk Mormonism as a "Heavenly Mother"; the male god Elohim and his wives are referred to as the "heavenly parents" of humanity). These heavenly parents are a paradigm of Mormon perfection that is specifically and *exclusively* heterosexual. Through the atonement of Jesus Christ and sacerdotal apotheosis, righteous (and heterosexual) Mormon men will gain godhood themselves and go off to other "empty" parts of the cosmos with their now-godly wives to create and recreate humanity in a continuous cycle of apotheosis for all of eternity. Therefore Mormon authorities theologically and cosmologically have more cause than all other religions to seek out anxiously and earnestly the reason(s) that homosexuality manifests itself amongst male and female human beings. Eradicating or "curing" same-sex desires and activities is seen as a theological imperative in order for every Mormon (and potential Mormon) to obtain this promised godhood. Yet despite more than 160 years of confronting homosexual activities among their own leaders and lay members, all Mormon "Prophets, Seers, and Revelators" have yet to divine or reveal successfully the cause of homosexuality. Especially in the past forty years, one LDS authority or another has stated a cause with divine, authoritative certainty - yet all attempts at "reorientation", cures, therapy, etc. have yielded only scattered and dubious results at the very best. Ironically Boyd Packer, one of the most vociferously homophobic of all Mormon apostles who has promoted a mass of confusing causes of homosexuality, in 1990 was the first to admit that Mormon authorities might not understand homosexuality at all.

Since George Q. Cannon's 1879 implication of monogamy as the cause for the "crime against nature", over thirty causes (or "non-causes" - statements of what does not cause it) of homosexuality have been identified by various LDS authorities, as revealed in official and semi-official LDS publications. They are listed below in order of the number of their occurrences within the 48 published statements I have found:

- Not genetics, biology, or heredity, (11 times)
- Parental failure, (10)
- Disease/Contagion, (6)
- Not known, (5)
- Satanic influence, (5)
- Biology, (4)
- Environment, (4)
- Pornography, (4)
- Combination of several factors, (3)
- Masturbation, (3)
- Molestation in childhood, (3)
- Free agency, (2)
- Selfishness, (2)
- Abnormal, transgressive affliction, (1)
- Aggressive acts, (1)
- Avoiding domesticity, (1)
- Constitutional predisposition, (1)
- Curiosity, (1)
- Ignoring sex roles, (1)
- Learned behavior, (1)
- Monogamy, (1)
- Peer rejection, (1)
- Physical perversion, (1)
- Powerful inclination, (1)
- Proselyting, (1)
- Search for psychosexual role, (1)
- Seductive fathers, (1)
- Social permissiveness, (1)
- Speaking about it, (1)

Unchecked appetites, (1)
 Unconscious biological compulsions, (1)

Not wishing to bombard readers with statistical analysis, which is not my forte in any case, I hereafter provide just a brief summation of some of the more interesting points that these statistics show, along with some occasional historical background. Following the summation is a fully referenced list of each published statement by an LDS authority in chronological order, allowing readers to see for themselves the often confusing, misinformed, mean-spirited, and erroneous conclusions drawn by men claiming divine insight into the human condition. Although I hope this list of published statements is exhaustive, I am certain that at least a few did not make it into my analysis through simple oversight. See also the [appended chart \(PDF\)](#) showing an overview of the frequencies of these statements over the years.

In reviewing the chronological list of statements and the accompanying chart, revealing patterns start to emerge. 18 of the 31 proposed causes are mentioned only once. Several of these etiologies are blatantly ridiculous, such as monogamy, aggressive acts, proselyting (much like Mormon missionaries), seductive fathers, or Boyd Packer's "speaking about it" (which lead him in a 45 minute speech on homosexuality at Brigham Young University to mention the "h word" only once in his entire talk).

Two of the most contemptible and destructive theories from LDS authorities are: 1) that homosexuality is caused by satanic persuasion or encouragement; and 2) that it spreads contagiously just by the mere physical presence/existence of a homosexual. Being told that our desires, attractions, and even feelings of love for another person are satanically inspired or of a demonic and evil nature, has been spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically crippling to myself personally and to the hundreds of other Gay Latter-day Saints I have met since the mid-1980s, primarily through the international support group [Affirmation: Gay and Lesbian Mormons](#).

The belief that homosexuality spreads by physical contagion has even led its proponents to suggest that the contagious therefore should be either alienated from the general populace to avoid further contamination, or be utterly destroyed, in the belief that the destruction of all the homosexuals in one generation would forever end the existence of homosexuality on earth. That, in fact, is the "divinely revealed" conclusion that Apostle George Q. Cannon drew in 1897. At October General Conference in Salt Lake City that year, Cannon first addressed the assembled Latter-day Saints about Oscar Wilde and his recent trial in England for sodomy, although Cannon refused to name both Wilde and his crime. Oscar Wilde had visited Salt Lake City in April 1882 to speak at the Salt Lake Theatre, and actually been welcomed and entertained by church president John Taylor (and George Q. Cannon was Taylor's First Counselor); President Taylor even took Wilde on a private tour of his mansion, the Gardo House, and of Salt Lake.^[6] Now that Wilde was a *persona non grata* in acceptable society, Cannon lashed out at him for "being guilty of a most abominable crime". Speaking of the abominable sins and crimes which had "caused the utter destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah", Cannon asked, "How will these be stopped? Only by the destruction of those who practice them. Why, if a little nest of them were left that were guilty of these things, they would soon corrupt others, as some are being corrupted among us." Toward the end of this homophobic tirade, Cannon, strongly invoking divine authority, asked again,

How can this [sodomy] be stopped? Not while those who have knowledge of these filthy crimes exist. The only way, according to all that I can understand as the word of God, is for the Lord to wipe them out, that there will be none left to perpetuate the knowledge of these dreadful practices among the children of men. And God will do it, as sure as He has spoken by the mouths of His prophets.

Almost 70 years later, the president of church-owned Brigham Young University (BYU), arch-conservative lawyer Ernest L. Wilkinson, again invoked contagion as the reason for demanding that all homosexual students then enrolled at BYU immediately withdraw from matriculation there. Although Wilkinson and other BYU officials met with the two apostles assigned to deal with homosexuality (Spencer W. Kimball and Mark E. Petersen) on September 12, 1962 and

decided not to address the student-body publicly about homosexuality "but handle each case on its own", they did decide "as a general policy that no one will be admitted as a student at the B.Y.U. whom we have convincing evidence is a homosexual."^[7] Three years later, so many homosexual students had been discovered on campus that Wilkinson decided it was necessary to go public with the school's anti-Gay admission policy. Therefore in the fall of 1965, Wilkinson told the entire student-body that BYU did not intend

to admit to our campus any homosexuals. If any of you have this tendency and have not completely abandoned it, may I suggest that you leave the university immediately after this assembly....*We do not want others on this campus to be contaminated by your presence.* [emphasis added]

This speech, ironically titled "Make Honor Your Standard", was published by the church-owned newspaper, the *Deseret News*, in its popular LDS "Church News" Sunday supplement.^[8]

Two of the more bizarre and confusing addresses on the topic are Richard G. Scott's 1994 General Conference address, "Making the Right Choices", and Boyd K. Packer's 1978 BYU address, "To the One". Despite several close readings of Scott's brief comments on homosexuality, their exact meaning continues to elude me. The best I can summarize is that he believes that all "sexual immorality" causes powerful physical and emotional stimuli, which lead to "an unquenchable appetite", which then "engenders selfishness" (see discussion of Packer below) and "aggressive acts such as brutality, abortion, sexual abuse, and violent crime." All these stimuli at last "can lead to acts of homosexuality, and they are evil and absolutely wrong."

Packer's "To the One" sermon at an ecclesiastical meeting of all Mormons at BYU in 1978 is the most confusing and logically-twisted of all LDS speeches on the topic, yet it remains one of the most influential in current Mormon thought some 30 years later. Haphazardly woven together throughout the talk, Packer offers six major explanations of the origins of homosexuality (and a closer reading might reveal a few minor ones) leaving the unaware reader rather clueless as to what Packer truly believes on the topic. Packer states first that it is an unnatural, abnormal, transgressive affliction (harkening back to the idea of its contagiousness). Then he introduces the idea which I believe has been of the most devastating consequence to any healthy Gay LDS identity, and that is that "homosexual" is only an "adjective to describe a temporary condition" - it just describes fleeting desires and actions; but for Packer - and now for Mormonism - it most emphatically is not a **noun** "naming a permanent" condition. This denial of the authenticity of homosexuals (as nouns) has been at the core of the LDS "cure ministry" since the late 1980s (starting first with the now defunct Phoenix Project and continuing with the ironically misnamed Evergreen International). This theory of Packer has led church leaders to insist on officially referring to homosexuality as "SSA" (same-sex attraction), and refusing to call people "homosexuals"; the church now insists that those who perform homosexual actions are not really "Gay people" but simply heterosexuals who "suffer from or struggle with SSA". Recent ecclesiastical addresses have patronizingly referred to "so-called gays and lesbians", the "so-called gay-lesbian movement", and "those who refer to themselves as homosexuals". In September 2006, Apostle Dallin Oaks (the former president of BYU) perfectly echoed Boyd Packer's theory of adjectivity. When asked hypothetically what he would tell a son of his who had just come out to him as Gay, Oaks responded

I think it's important for you [son] to understand that homosexuality, which you've spoken of, is not a noun that describes a condition. It's an adjective that describes feelings or behavior. I encourage you, as you struggle with these challenges, not to think of yourself as a 'something' or 'another,' except that you're a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and you're my son, and that you're struggling with challenges.^[9]

After offering this theory on homosexual non-existence, Packer then weaves into his BYU address the idea that just speaking about homosexuality can cause it. Thus, even though his entire 4,000-word address is on homosexuality, he only speaks the word homosexual once - and only as an adjective - , describing "the very few, who may be subject to homosexual

temptation."^[10] Later in the talk Packer explains why "we in the Church do not talk more openly about this subject....With many things, it is easy - very easy - to cause the very things we are trying to avoid."^[11] Packer also insists that there is absolutely no inherent, biological or physiological component to homosexuality, despite "some very convincing evidence" and the conclusions of "so-called scientific literature".^[12] He then brings up the old molestation-seduction charge: some who "get tangled up in this disorder become predators," Packer informs. "They proselyte the young and inexperienced," he says, much as Mormon missionaries do.^[13] Lastly, Packer offers a rather surprising etiology that "may be hidden because it is so obvious." He knows it is controversial: "I am conscious that when I mention it, the first reaction may be resistance, resentment, even open hostility - that is to be expected - but hear me out! Have you explored the possibility that the cause, when found, will turn out to be a very typical form of selfishness - selfishness in a very subtle form?"^[14]

Besides those statements that are deeply confusing, when looking at the group of causes overall, one notes that some are even blatantly contradictory, such as whether homosexuality is biological, genetic, and/or hereditary or not. As just noted above, Apostle Packer insisted there was no biological or physiological aspect to homosexuality. 10 other times, LDS leaders agreed with Packer. Yet five times LDS authorities have publicly disagreed with ecclesiastical pronouncements and admitted there is something biological to homosexuality. Two BYU professors, Reuben W. Rhees and Donovan E. Fleming, working with rats in the mid-1980s, found they could alter female rats biologically and these would bear rats who attempted to mate with other rats of the same sex. Their findings were announced in the campus-sponsored magazine *BYU Today* in 1985 and in the campus newspaper in 1987, but I can find no other academic publication of these findings, which suggests that perhaps the BYU administration was not pleased and did not encourage them to publish their findings more broadly, to avoid participation in typical academic debate. Allen E. Bergin, another BYU professor, stated first in 1973 that homosexuals were "in bondage to the demands of biological impulses and other stimuli" and slightly clarified his biological theory in 1988 (see below). And lastly, A. Dean Byrd, then Assistant Commissioner of LDS Family Services, also admitted a biological component to homosexuality in 1999.

Further confusing the subject, some LDS authorities have said that the etiology of homosexuality is a combination of several different factors, usually citing things like environment, molestation, and even a biological predisposition. For example in 1988, Allen Bergin, the BYU psychology professor who was also the director from 1976 to 1980 of the "Values Institute" at BYU (a school- and church-sponsored and well funded anti-homosexual think tank),^[15] wrote a brief article for the official church magazine, *The Ensign*, referring to "homosexual inclinations" as being "caused by some combination of biology and environment." 11 years later, A. Dean Byrd wrote the homophobic "When a Loved One Struggles with Same-Sex Attraction," also for the *Ensign*. While insisting that homosexuality (or "SSA") is neither innate nor genetic, he emphasizes that what "is clear is that homosexuality results from an interaction of social, biological, and psychological factors", including "temperament, personality traits, sexual abuse, familial factors, and treatment by one's peers."

On the other hand, in 1987, married LDS clinicians Thomas E. Pritt, PhD and Ann E. Pritt, MSW, decried in the annual scholarly journal of the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists (AMCAP) the "misleading perspective" of some clinicians that "the multiple roots of homosexuality are so diverse that no clear picture of etiology can be discerned. Different degrees and forms of homosexuality exist, and no one explanation fits all the data." They responded,

Contrary to this view, one can find many common threads that have relevance to both the evolution of homosexuality and its perpetuation. Homosexuals may be different in appearance, some being more masculine and some more feminine. Their sexual behaviors may vary. Nevertheless, they are the same in that all are seeking something through the medium of social, emotional, and sexual interchanges with others of their own sex. Whether macho or effeminate or anywhere in between, whatever the combination of their physical endowment and social learning history, all have arrived at

the same place and seek essentially the same thing—a continuing interest in and need for others of their own sex. [16]

Despite this audacious claim for a single etiology, their own "revelatory" church leaders over the decades have consistently been unable to arrive at any definitive etiological conclusion and most recently generally admit that they don't understand homosexuality at all. Yet for the Mormon Church, homosexuality officially remains intrinsically sinful, and unacceptable legally, socially, and doctrinally. The 30 plus explanations of LDS authorities remind me of a blindfolded person trying to shoot a mosquito with a shotgun. Wildly aiming in as many different directions as possible, they hope one day to actually strike the mosquito with a random shotgun pellet. Only recently do they seem to acknowledge the fruitlessness (no pun intended) of this quest. Since five LDS authorities have now claimed as of 1990 that the cause of homosexuality is not known by the church's "prophets, seers, and revelators", perhaps their church will begin a new phase of divinatory inquiry where they leave behind their quest for a cause and a "cure" and instead begin seriously to ask what gifts and other benefits do Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Latter-day Saints have to share with their church, and how can the authenticity and reality of a Gay presence in the church be accommodated in an otherwise overtly heterosexual Latter-day Saint theology.

CHRONOLOGY OF WHAT MORMON AUTHORITIES HAVE SAID

The following are quotations from LDS authorities who have publicly spoken on the etiology of homosexuality. In bold is a summation of their argument, followed by the authorities name, his position in the LDS Church, the date of the statement, and the reference. Their statements are then quoted in italics. The entries are in chronological order.

Monogamy

George Q. Cannon, Apostle and Assistant Counselor to Brigham Young
April 6, 1879, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 20, p. 200

"I consider our false tradition upon this subject [of monogamy] one of the greatest evils at the present time that exists upon the earth. It has come down to us from the Greeks and Romans, than whom a more abominable lot of people never lived upon the earth. To read their books is enough to make a man with the least feeling of modesty blush and be ashamed of his race.... Not only crimes, but crimes against nature were justified by some of the best and most noted of Greek philosophers, and were practiced by Sophocles, Socrates, and others; and yet this is the philosophy that has come down to us."

Contagion requiring destruction of the contagious

George Q. Cannon, 1st Counselor in First Presidency
October 1897, *Report of the 68th Semiannual General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 65-66

"If we may believe that which is told to us, without going into researches ourselves, it and other kindred wickedness, is far too common. The same sin that caused the utter destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah! This and other abominable crimes are being practiced. How will these be stopped? Only by the destruction of those who practice them. Why, if a little nest of them were left that were guilty of these things, they would soon corrupt others, as some are being corrupted among us. In coming to these mountains we hoped to find a place where we could live secluded from the abominations of Babylon. But here in this secluded place wickedness intrudes itself, and is practiced in this land which we have dedicated to the Lord as a land of Zion! How can this be stopped? Not while those who have knowledge of these filthy crimes

exist. The only way, according to all that I can understand as the word of God, is for the Lord to wipe them out, that there will be none left to perpetuate the knowledge of these dreadful practices among the children of men. And God will do it, as sure as He has spoken by the mouths of His prophets."

Malady [disease] brought on by lack of self-mastery

Spencer W. Kimball, Apostle

July 10, 1964, "A Counseling Problem in the Church" - BYU Devotional for LDS Seminary & Institute Instructors

"The cure for this malady [homosexuality] lies in self-mastery".

Contagion

Ernest W. Wilkinson, BYU President

Deseret News, "Church News" supplement, November 13, 1965, p. 11

BYU does not intend "to admit to our campus any homosexuals. If any of you have this tendency and have not completely abandoned it, may I suggest that you leave the university immediately after this assembly; and if you will be honest enough to let us know the reason, we will voluntarily refund your tuition. We do not want others on this campus to be contaminated by your presence."

1) Masturbation

2) Satanic incitement leads to it and then into bestiality

3) Not born with it; made in God's image and God is not homosexual

4) Parental failure

Spencer W. Kimball, Apostle

"Crime Against Nature", chapter six of *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft) 1969, pp. 77-78, 85

"Thus prophets anciently and today condemn masturbation...While we should not regard this weakness as the heinous sin which some other sexual practices are, it is of itself bad enough to require sincere repentance. What is more, it too often leads to grievous sin, even to that sin against nature, homosexuality. For, done in private, it evolves often into mutual masturbation - practiced with another person of the same sex - and then into total homosexuality." [77-78]

"Sin in sex practices tends to have a 'snowballing' effect. As the restraints fall away, Satan incites the carnal man to ever-deepening degeneracy in his search for excitement until in many instances he is lost to any former consideration of decency. Thus it is that through the ages, perhaps as an extension of homosexual practices, men and women have sunk even to seeking sexual gratification with animals." [78]

"Many have been misinformed that they are powerless in the matter, not responsible for the tendency, and that God 'made them that way'. This is as untrue as any other of the diabolical lies Satan has concocted. It is blasphemy. Man is made in the image of God. Does the pervert think God to be 'that way'?" [85]

"Sometimes not heavenly but earthly parents get the blame. Granted that certain conditions make it easier for one to become a pervert, the second Article of Faith teaches that a man will be punished for his own sins. He can, if normal, rise above the frustrations of childhood and stand on his own feet." [85]

Pornography and television

Victor L. Brown Sr., 2nd Counselor in Presiding Bishopric
April 4, 1970, *Conference Reports*, April 1970, p. 31

"The chief psychiatrist at one of Washington's largest hospitals says, 'A normal 12- or 13-year-old boy or girl exposed to pornographic literature could develop into a homosexual'....[Recounts story of a minister performing a same-sex marriage for two men, which was reported on TV.] Who is responsible for this moral decay? The children? Hardly. It is we adults, those of us who permit the sale of filth on our newsstands and also permit the broadcasting of it over airways."

1) Curiosity

2) Curable despite Satanic lies

3) Not born

Spencer W. Kimball, Acting Presiding Apostle

"New Horizons for Homosexuals", church-published pamphlet, 1971, pp. 3 and 11

"Some begin the ruinous practice of perversion through curiosity and then become entangled in its tentacles." [p. 3]

"One of Satan's strongest weapons is to make the victim believe the practice incurable regardless of one's effort....Satan tells his victims that it is a natural way of life; that it is normal; that perverts are a different kind of people born 'that way' and that they cannot change. This is a base lie.....Many...authorities in the field have proclaimed that homosexuality, like fornication, adultery, robbery, and other detestable sins is curable." [p. 11]

Spreads like a prairie fire (contagion)

Spencer W. Kimball, Acting Presiding Apostle

Delivered April 3, 1971, "Voices of the Past, of the Present, of the Future, *Ensign*, June 1971, p. 16

"There are said to be millions of perverts who have relinquished their natural affection and bypassed courtship and normal marriage relationships. This practice is spreading like a prairie fire and changing our world. They are without 'natural affection' for God, for spouses, and even for children."

Ignoring differences between the sexes and sex-roles

Victor L. Brown Sr., 2nd Counselor in Presiding Bishopric

"The Meaning of Morality", *Ensign*, June 1971, p. 55

"The Lord defined some very basic differences between men and women. He gave the male what we call masculine traits and the female feminine traits. He did not intend either of the sexes to adopt the other's traits but, rather, that men should look and act like men and that women should look and act like women. When these differences are ignored, an unwholesome relationship develops, which, if not checked, can lead to the reprehensible, tragic sin of homosexuality. In other words, we have a responsibility as priesthood bearers to be examples of true manhood."

Demonic inspiration

Bernard P. Brockbank, Assistant to the Council of Twelve

"The Ten Commandments", *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, p. 61

"Fornication and homosexual acts are inspired by the devil and are grievous sins in the sight of God."

Unconscious, compulsive biological impulses

Dr. Allen E. Bergin (Psychology, BYU)

"Toward a Theory of Human Agency", *Ensign*, July 1973, p. 33

"Some homosexuals, for example, seem to be compulsively driven to frequent and sometimes bizarre acts that they say occur without the mediation of conscious intent. The act once

repeated, the motivation behind it can become so powerful that one is literally in bondage to the demands of biological impulses and related stimuli."

Childhood seduction/molestation

Dr. Lindsay M. Curtis, M.D.

"Why does the Church oppose homosexuality? Why is it wrong?", *Ensign*, July 1974, p. 14

"There is harm in homosexuality. Many homosexuals seek to introduce others into their practice, often those in their tender, impressionable years."

Pornography, among others

Spencer W. Kimball, Church President

October 4, 1974, "God Will Not Be Mocked", *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, p. 4

"Every form of homosexuality is sin. Pornography is one of the approaches to that transgression."

Poor examples set by parents and community leaders

N. Eldon Tanner, 1st Counselor in the First Presidency

October 6, 1974, "Why Is My Boy Wandering Tonight?", *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, p. 84

"Many are in the wilderness because of following the poor example set by leaders in homes and communities. Traffic in this area is most congested and confusing. Pornography, fornication, adultery, and homosexuality are permitted and practiced in the world today to such an extent that we are truly following the ways of Sodom and Gomorrah. There is too much corruption in the world. We need strong leaders of good character in all places—leaders who are examples of integrity, dependability, and righteousness."

1) Seductive Fathers

2) Avoidance of Domesticity

Dr. Robert D. Card, M.D. [\[17\]](#)

"Counseling the Homosexual in a Private Practice Setting", AMCAP (Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists) annual journal, Vol. 1, no. 1, 1975, pp. 10-13

Card's definition of male homosexuality was "a conditioned avoidance of an adult female in a domestic setting". According to Card, Lesbianism is caused when "the husband or father has been covertly seductive, buying the girl slinky dresses and all sort of things and at the same time the girl cannot relate to the mother". As to "curing" homosexuality, he said that, "I'm afraid that the measure of success that I'm looking for is marriage".

Lack of parental affection

Victor L. Brown Jr., BYU Instructor

"Two Views of Sexuality", *Ensign*, July 1975, p. 50

"Children learn how to love in a stable, healthy family. Parents need to know that lack of proper affection in the home can result in unnatural behavior in their children such as homosexuality or inability to be an effective parent when the time comes."

Environmental influences

Gordon B. Hinckley, Apostle

October 1975, "Opposing Evil", *Ensign*, November 1975, p. 38

Speaking about a young Gay man who had recently visited Hinckley, he said, "We talked of the influences that had put him where he is, of the home from which he came, of associations with

other young men, of books and magazines read, of shows seen."

Failure in parenting

J. Richard Clarke, 2nd Counselor in Presiding Bishopric
April 1977, "Ministering to Needs through LDS Social Services", *Ensign*, May 1977, p. 85

[Read a letter from a self-hating Gay man who had a poor relationship with his father.]
"It should go without saying that many of these problems would be alleviated if parents would spend more time teaching and rearing their children. Related to the story that I gave at the beginning of my talk is evidence of a clinical researcher who, after studying 850 individual cases, stated: "Homosexuality would not occur where there is a normal, loving father-and-son relationship." Any of our people living in righteousness would normally avoid being involved in these problems."

Social permissiveness and parental failure

Spencer W. Kimball, Church President
October 1977, "The Foundations of Righteousness", *Ensign*, November 1977, p. 4

"The growing permissiveness in modern society gravely concerns us. Certainly our Heavenly Father is distressed with the increasing inroads among his children of such insidious sins as adultery and fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, abortions, pornography, population control, alcoholism, cruelty expressed in wife-beating and child-abuse, dishonesty, vandalism, violence, and crime generally, including the sin of living together without marriage.

"We call upon our Church members everywhere to renew their efforts to strengthen the home and to honor their parents, and to build better communications between parent and child.

"Important as it is, building stronger homes is not enough in the fight against rising permissiveness. We therefore urge Church members as citizens to lift their voices, to join others in unceasingly combatting, in their communities and beyond, the inroads of pornography and the general flaunting of permissiveness. Let us vigorously oppose the shocking developments which encourage the old sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, and which defile the human body as the temple of God."

Aren't born but "made"

Mark E. Petersen, Apostle
January 14, 1978, "The strong delusions", *Church News*, p. 16

A 1977 Sacramento Bee article "gave expert evidence that homosexuals certainly are not born - they are made - further defusing claims that they 'can't help it.'"

- 1) **An unnatural, abnormal, transgressive affliction**
- 2) **A curable, temporary adjective, not a permanent noun**
- 3) **Speaking about it can cause it**
- 4) **The young and inexperienced can be proselyted into it**
- 5) **There is no physiological component to it**
- 6) **Caused by selfishness**

Boyd K. Packer, Apostle
March 5, 1978, "To the One" pamphlet of BYU Twelve Stake Fireside address, published in 1978 by "Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints"

Finding "the cause of this condition" is "an essential step in developing a cure."

(1) "It is not desirable; it is unnatural; it is abnormal; it is an affliction. When practiced, it is immoral. It is a transgression." (p. 2)

(2) *"I accept that word [homosexual] as an adjective to describe a temporary condition. I reject it as a noun naming a permanent one." (p. 2)*

(3) *The "reason why we in the Church do not talk more openly about this subject"...is because "with many things, it is easy - very easy - to cause the very things we are trying to avoid." (p. 3)*

(4) *"Some who become tangled up in this disorder become predators. They proselyte the young or the inexperienced." (pp. 5-6)*

(5) *"Perversion may have some very physical expressions, but it is not a physical disorder. A most extensive physical examination will not reveal one shred of evidence that it is." (p. 9)*

(6) *"Have you explored the possibility that the cause, when found, will turn out to be a very typical form of selfishness - selfishness in a very subtle form?" (pp. 10-11)*

Appetites unchecked by family life and real religion

Spencer W. Kimball, Church President

April 1978, "Listen to the Prophets, *Ensign*, May 1978, p. 76

"Once the carnal in man is no longer checked by the restraints of family life and by real religion, there comes an avalanche of appetites which gathers momentum that is truly frightening. As one jar looses and begins to roll down hill, still another breaks loose, whether it is an increase in homosexuality, corruption, drugs, or abortion. Each began as an appetite that needed to be checked but which went unchecked. Thus misery achieves a ghastly monument."

Free agency

Mark E. Petersen, Apostle

December 16, 1978, "Sin is No Excuse", *Church News*, p. 16

"It was not God who made them [homosexuals] that way....He gave all mankind free agency."

Poor fathering skills

Ed D. Lauritsen, Values Institute, BYU

February 6, 1979, "The Role of the Father in Male Homosexuality", paper presented to LDS Social Services

*"[N]urturant fathering...almost serves as a form of psychological immunization against homosexuality in most cases". He also told his audience that "it is incumbent upon...all LDS clinicians to labor for the **prevention** of homosexuality" (emphasis in original). He indicated that every time "we assist a man toward improving his relationships with his children...we are, in effect, helping him reduce the possibility of homosexuality among his children, and in turn, among his children's children".*

A physical perversion simply requiring repentance

James O. Mason, Church Commissioner of Health

1980 (?) undated, "Attitudes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Toward Certain Medical Problems"

"The Church looks upon the homosexual act as a physical perversion, and Church leaders are advised to...persuade them [homosexuals] that repentance can bring them forgiveness from such transgressions."

God did not create homosexuals because we are in God's image and God is not homosexual

Spencer W. Kimball, Church President

October 1980, "President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality", *Ensign*, November 1980, p. 97

"'God made me that way,' some say, as they rationalize and excuse themselves for their [homosexual] perversions. 'I can't help it,' they add. This is blasphemy. Is man not made in the image of God, and does he think God to be 'that way'?"

1) Learned, not inherited

2) A four-phase search for a psychosexual role which enables a man to merge with a defined role, involving a) parental failure and b) masturbation

Victor L. Brown Jr., DSW, Board of Governors, Assoc. of Mormon Counselors & Psychotherapists (AMCAP) and Area Director, LDS Social Services in Northern California
October 2, 1980, "Male Homosexuality: Identity Seeking a Role", *AMCAP Journal*, April 1981, pp. 1, 3-4

"May I share with you some conclusions I have reached. First, homosexuality is learned, not inherent." [p. 1]

*"The first phase is **pre-homosexual role confusion** in childhood and includes parent-child disturbances, gender and role distortion, relationship skill deficits, and erotization." [Brown later relates this role confusion to "troubled, even pathological parent-child and parent-to-parent relationships, on p. 4".]*

*"The second phase, **pre-homosexual compensation**, involves unilateral masturbatory fantasy...fragmentation, and self-focus." [Brown later defines this as partially involving "masturbatory fantasy", on p. 5]*

*"The third phase is **crisis of [role] fit**, a severe realization of being different."*

*"The final phase is **homosexual role** resolution, or "merging"....where the person and the role merge. [pp. 3-4]*

Masturbation can lead to homosexuality

Spencer W. Kimball, Church President
November 1980, "President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality", *Ensign*, p. 97 and *New Era*, p. 39

"Sometimes masturbation is the introduction to the more serious sins of exhibitionism and the gross sin of homosexuality."

Parental Failure in the Home

Ezra Taft Benson, Presiding Apostle
November 1982, "Fundamentals of Enduring Family Relationships", *Ensign*, p. 59

"Today we are aware of great problems in our society. The most obvious are sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, drug abuse, alcoholism, vandalism, pornography, and violence.

"These grave problems are symptoms of failure in the home—the disregarding of principles and practices established by God in the very beginning.

"Because some parents have departed from the principles the Lord gave for happiness and success, many families throughout the world are undergoing great stress and trauma. Many parents have been enticed to abandon their responsibilities in the home to seek after an elusive 'self-fulfillment'." [These three paragraphs are quoted again by Benson verbatim in July 1992's First Presidency message.]

Biological, *in utero* hormonal stress

Dr. Reuben W. Rhees (Zoology, BYU) and Dr. Donovan E. Fleming (Psychology, BYU)
April 1985, "Scientists Study Effects of Prenatal Stress", *BYU Today*, April 1985, p. 14

"If you block those critical [male] hormones or disturb that delicate balance, masculinization does not occur."

"The demasculinized behavior of male rats includes decreased sexual activity in the male role and, given the right cues by aggressive males, female-like responses."

Selfishness and pornography

Theodore M. Burton, First Quorum of the Seventy

June 3, 1986 (BYU Devotional), "A Marriage to Last through Eternity", *Ensign*, June 1987, p. 12

"...I have come to understand some of the behaviors that lead to transgression. What are they? Generally they are various personal indulgences based on selfishness. One of the greatest of these is the use of pornography. Pornography is related to such sins as self abuse, homosexuality, fornication, adultery, child and spouse abuse, incest, rape, and cruelty."

Biological, *in utero* hormonal stress

Dr. Reuben W. Rhees (Zoology, BYU) and Dr. Donovan E. Fleming (Psychology, BYU)

"Stress feminizes male rats", BYU's *Daily Universe*, 16 November, 1987

"If the male brain does not receive enough testosterone to fully masculinize it, the brain retains female characteristics. In some instances, even though the rats are anatomically male, 'they are significantly less masculine and more feminine,' said Rhees."

Combination of biological and environmental factors

Dr. Allen E. Bergin (Psychology, BYU)

October 1988, "Questions and Answers", *Ensign*, p. 10

"For example, though a person may suffer from homosexual inclinations that are caused by some combination of biology and environment, the gospel requires that he or she develop firm self-discipline and make an energetic effort to change."

It is not known

Boyd K. Packer, Apostle

October 1990, "Covenants", *Ensign*, November 1990, p. 85

After lengthy discussion of "Gay and Lesbian Rights", Packer said, "Why, they ask, does this happen to me?...They write that their bishop could not answer the 'why'....We are sometimes told that leaders in the Church do not really understand these problems. Perhaps we don't. There are many 'whys' for which we just do not have simple answers."

It is not known

Understanding and Helping Those Who Have Homosexual Problems - Suggestions for Ecclesiastical Leaders (church-published guidebook), The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1992

Some people who seek help for homosexual problems may have concluded that experiences from their youth, such as perceived problems with a parent or some other older person, contributed to their inappropriate feelings. Some may believe that they have not consciously chosen to have such feelings in the first place. No general agreement exists about the causes of such problems.

It is not known

Harold Brown, Commissioner of LDS Social Services

May 10 1992, transcript of "Take Two" television program, with Rod Decker, Salt Lake City; transcript and tape recording of show in Connell O'Donovan's possession

Rod Decker: What causes homosexuality?

Harold Brown: There're a lot of theories and there's no generally accepted reason for the cause of homosexuality. There're a lot of different theories.

Parental failure

Ezra Taft Benson, Church President

July 1992, "First Presidency Message: Salvation - A Family Affair", *Ensign*, p. 2

"Today we are aware of great problems in our society. The most obvious are sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, drug abuse, alcoholism, vandalism, pornography, and violence.

"These grave problems are symptoms of failure in the home—the disregarding of principles and practices established by God in the very beginning.

*"Because some parents have departed from the principles the Lord gave for happiness and success, many families throughout the world are undergoing great stress and trauma. Many parents have been enticed to abandon their responsibilities in the home to seek after an elusive 'self-fulfillment'." [Quoted verbatim from Benson's October 1982 General Conference address - see November 1982 *Ensign*.]*

Childhood molestation?

Spencer J. Condie, Quorum of the Seventy

November 1993, "A Mighty Change of Heart", *Ensign*, p. 15

"I know another good man who was reared in a family without the blessings of the gospel. Through a series of unfortunate events in his early youth, he was introduced to homosexuality, and gradually he became a prisoner of this addictive behavior."

Stimuli from acts of sexual immorality or aggression can lead to homosexuality

Richard G. Scott, Quorum of the Seventy

October 1994, "Making the Right Choices", *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, p. 38. [Also reprinted in Richard G. Scott, "Serious Questions, Serious Answers", *New Era*, Oct. 1995, p. 4]

"Sexual immorality creates a barrier to the influence of the Holy Spirit with all its uplifting, enlightening, and empowering capabilities. It causes powerful physical and emotional stimulation. In time, that creates an unquenchable appetite that drives the offender to ever more serious sin. It engenders selfishness and can produce aggressive acts such as brutality, abortion, sexual abuse, and violent crime. Such stimulation can lead to acts of homosexuality, and they are evil and absolutely wrong."

Might be inherited but difficult to prove. "Sexual orientation" (sic) is not inborn and is mutable.

James E. Faust, Apostle

November 15, 1994, in a BYU address, "Trying to Serve the Lord Without Offending the Devil"; reproduced as the First Presidency Message in the September 1995 *Ensign* under the title, "Serving the Lord and Resisting the Devil," pp. 2-7.

*"There is some widely accepted theory extant that homosexuality is inherited. How can this be? No scientific evidence demonstrates absolutely, **absolutely** that this is so. Besides, if it were so, it would frustrate the whole plan of mortal happiness. Our designation as men or women began before this world was. In contrast to the socially accepted doctrine that homosexuality is inborn, a number of respectable authorities contend that homosexuality is not acquired by birth. The false belief of inborn sexual orientation denies to repentant souls the opportunity to change and will ultimately lead to discouragement, disappointment, and despair." (emphasis in original)*

**(1) Not inherited; an interaction between constitutional predisposition and environment
(2) Satanic persuasion**

Dallin H. Oaks, Apostle

October 1995, "Same-Gender Attraction", *Ensign*, pp. 7-8

"It is easy to hypothesize that inheritance plays a role in sexual orientation. However it is important to remember, as conceded by two advocates of this approach, that 'the concept of substantial heritability should not be confused with the concept of inevitable heritability. ... Most mechanisms probably involve interactions between constitutional predispositions and environmental events.'" (Quotes R. C. Friedman and J. Downey, "Neurobiology and Sexual Orientation: Current Relationships," Journal of Neuropsychiatry 5 (48 (1991): 1089-96.)

Satan "seeks to undermine the principle of individual accountability, to persuade us to misuse our sacred powers of procreation, to discourage marriage and childbearing by worthy men and women, and to confuse what it means to be male or female."

**(1) Satanic encouragement
(2) Not inherited**

James E. Faust, 2nd Counselor in First Presidency

November 1995, "First Presidency Message: Serving the Lord & Resisting the Devil", *Liahona*, Nov. 1995, p. 3 (see Faust, Nov. 15, 1994).

"Satan is only interested in our misery, which he promotes by trying to persuade men and women to act contrary to God's plan. One way he does this is by encouraging the inappropriate use of sacred creative powers."

"There is some widely accepted theory extant that homosexuality is inherited. How can this be? No scientific evidence demonstrates absolutely that this is so. Besides, if it were so, it would frustrate the whole plan of mortal happiness. Our designation as men or women began before this world was. In contrast to the socially accepted doctrine that homosexuality is inborn, a number of respectable authorities contend that homosexuality is not acquired by birth. The false belief of inborn homosexual orientation denies to repentant souls the opportunity to change and will ultimately lead to discouragement, disappointment, and despair."

Certain powerful inclinations

Gordon B. Hinckley, Church President

October 1998, "What Are People Asking About Us?"

"So-called gays and lesbians...may have certain inclinations which are powerful and which may be difficult to control."

**(1) It is not innate or immutable
(2) It is not genetic
(3) Combination of social, biological, and psychological factors (including sexual abuse, poor parenting, and peer rejection)**

A. Dean Byrd, Ph.D., Assistant Commissioner of LDS Family Services

"When a Loved One Struggles with Same-Sex Attraction", *Ensign*, Sept. 1999, p. 51

"First, it is important to understand that homosexuality is not innate and unchangeable. Research has not proved that homosexuality is genetic. Even more important, many researchers whose studies have been used to support a biological model for homosexuality have determined that their work has been misinterpreted. What is clear is that homosexuality results from an interaction of social, biological, and psychological factors. These factors may include temperament, personality traits, sexual abuse, familial factors, and treatment by one's peers."

1) Pornography, improper music, and unworthy associates**2) A personal choice**

Boyd K. Packer, Acting Presiding Apostle

October 8, 2000, "Ye Are the Temple of God", *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, p. 72

"Normal desires and attractions emerge in the teenage years; there is the temptation to experiment, to tamper with the sacred power of procreation. These desires can be intensified, even perverted, by pornography, improper music, or the encouragement from unworthy associations. What would have only been a more or less normal passing phase in establishing gender identity can become implanted and leave you confused, even disturbed.

"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.

"With some few, there is the temptation which seems nearly overpowering for man to be attracted to man or woman to woman. The scriptures plainly condemn those who "dishonour their own bodies between themselves ... ; men with men working that which is unseemly" or "women [who] change the natural use into that which is against nature".

*"The gates of freedom, and the good or bad beyond, swing open or closed to the password **choice**. You are free to choose a path that may lead to despair, to disease, even to death."* (emphasis in original)

Not genetic or biological

A. Dean Byrd, PhD. (formerly of LDS Family Services)

October 2001, *Homosexuality and the Church of Jesus Christ: Understanding Homosexuality According to the Doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Cedar Fort Press

"The Church refutes the idea that homosexual orientation is genetically determined.... Furthermore, a genetic/biological cause of homosexual attraction has not found support in the scientific literature."

"Science has never proved a genetic link to sexual orientation. Moreover, the Church repeatedly, in nearly every statement about homosexual relations, teaches that homosexual attraction is not inherent to a person's particular genetic make-up and that they are quite able to change."

It is not known

Gordon B. Hinckley, Church President

December 26, 2004, interview with Larry King, on CNN's "Larry King Live"; transcript available on cnn.com

HINCKLEY: Well, we're not anti-gay. We are pro-family. Let me put it that way. And we love these

people and try to work with them and help them. We know they have a problem. We want to help them solve that problem.

KING: A problem they caused, or they were born with?

HINCKLEY: I don't know. I'm not an expert on these things. I don't pretend to be an expert on these things. The fact is, they have a problem.

The Church has no position; it is not known

Dallin H. Oaks, Apostle, and Lance B. Wickman, Quorum of the Seventy
September 2006, "Same Gender Attraction", <[online](#)>

PUBLIC AFFAIRS: You're saying the Church doesn't necessarily have a position on 'nurture or nature'....

ELDER OAKS: That's where our doctrine comes into play. The Church does not have a position on the causes of any of these susceptibilities or inclinations, including those related to same-gender attraction. Those are scientific questions - whether nature or nurture - those are things the Church doesn't have a position on.

ELDER WICKMAN: Whether it is nature or nurture really begs the important question, and a preoccupation with nature or nurture can, it seems to me, lead someone astray from the principles that Elder Oaks has been describing here. Why somebody has a same-gender attraction...who can say?

[1] LDS authorities have also historically referred to homosexuality as sodomy, buggery, the crime against nature, and same-gender or same-sex attraction, or simply "SSA".

[2] For the divinatory titles of church presidents and apostles, see Lewis R. Church, "Prophet, Seer, and Revelator", *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 3 (New York: Macmillan, 1992). For the number of Apostles since 1830, see <<http://personal.atl.bellsouth.net/w/o/wol3/q12.htm>> (7 September 2006).

[3] The official church publications I have drawn upon are the *Ensign* (for Mormon adults), the *New Era* (for youth), the *Liahona* (a compact version of the *Ensign* designed for international publication), *BYU Today*, the *AMCAP Journal*, the *Deseret News*, and several pamphlets and guides published by the LDS Church.

[4] Connell "Rocky" O'Donovan, "'The Abominable and Detestable Crime Against Nature': A Brief History of Homosexuality and Mormonism, 1840-1980", Brent Corcoran (ed.), *Multiply and Replenish: Mormon Essays on Sex and Family*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), pp. 132-4; now online in a greatly expanded version at connelldonovan.com

[5] For academic references to the speeches cited hereafter, see the chronological entries in "What Mormon Authorities Have Said" section.

[6] D. Michael Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996) p. 417; and O'Donovan, "Abominable", p. 144; see connelldonovan.com

[7] O'Donovan, *Abominable*, pp. 153-4; see connelldonovan.com.

[8] Ernest L. Wilkinson, "Make Honor Your Standard", *Deseret News*, Church News supplement, November 13, 1965, p. 11.

[9] Dallin H. Oaks and Lance B. Wickman, "Same Gender Attraction", September 2006, <<http://www.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/v/index.jsp?vgnextoid=27f71f1dd189f010VgnVCM100000176f620aRCRD&vgnextchannel=726511154963d010VgnVCM1000004e94610aRCRD&vgnextfmt=tab1>>, accessed July 27, 2007.

[10] Boyd K. Packer, "To the One", published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978, p. 3; accessible online at <<http://www.lds-mormon.com/tto.shtml>>.

[11] Packer, "To the One", p. 4.

[12] Packer, "To the One", pp. 4-5.

[13] Packer, "To the One", p. 6.

[14] Packer, "To the One", p. 10.

[15] O'Donovan, "Abominable", pp. 156-8, and 160; see connelldonovan.com.

[16] Pritt and Pritt, "Homosexuality: Getting Beyond the Therapeutic Impasse", *AMCAP Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (1987) pp. 37-66.

[17] Dr. Robert D. Card also performed horribly debilitating electric shock "therapy" on Gay Mormons for some 10 years of private practice in Salt Lake City, using referrals made by LDS bishops and other church leaders.

