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Reviewed by George L. Mitton and Rhett S. James

A Response to D. Michael Quinn’s Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History

Love flies out the door when money comes innuendo.¹

D. Michael Quinn is a former Mormon historian now turned homosexual apologist.² His *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example* appears to be, among other things, another attempt to generate tolerance and perhaps even acceptance for the notion of a special homosexual identity. This highly controversial book also seems to be Quinn’s attempt to talk Latter-day Saints into ceasing to view homosexual


² Quinn, whose Ph.D. in social history is from Yale University, taught history at Brigham Young University for twelve years. However, since 1988, he has been an “independent scholar and freelance writer” (inside back fold of dust cover). This appears to be another way of saying that Quinn has not secured a university post. See the report of an interview with Quinn by Mark Silk in which he relates that Quinn is “looking for an academic position.” *Lingua Franca* 6 (July–August 1996): 23. Contrary to some claims that have been made in connection with the promotion of his book, Quinn was never dean of graduate studies or chairman of the History Department at Brigham Young University. In the preface to the book (p. ix), Quinn calls attention to his departure from the university and also to his excommunication from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1993.
acts as immoral. It follows that if there is a homosexual identity, either genetically grounded or socially constructed—he seems to want to have it both ways—then apparently he thinks Latter-day Saints should cease being what he considers homophobic and make a place for homoerotic behavior within the church.

The core of Quinn’s story is that in the nineteenth century, beginning even with Joseph Smith, the Saints were considerably more tolerant of sodomy than they are at present. In this essay we will focus on this aspect of Quinn’s confused and confusing book, and not on the ideological staging that introduces his politically motivated and radically revisionist account of the Mormon past.

*Same-Sex Dynamics* is not Quinn’s first public effort to rationalize a supposed homosexual identity. This book was preceded by an article entitled “Male-Male Intimacy among Nineteenth-century Mormons: A Case Study.”³ We will occasionally refer to this essay in our discussion of the soundness of Quinn’s book, since both “Male-Male Intimacy” and *Same-Sex Dynamics* were based on the same materials and methods. Both Quinn’s essay and his book include mention of a bewildering array of same-gender behaviors, most of which have no homosexual component whatsoever, other than those present in Quinn’s sly innuendoes. “Male-Male Intimacy” thus becomes “Same-Sex Dynamics” in his book. And the focus on Latter-day Saints—Quinn’s “Mormons”—dominates both his essay and his book. In both publications Quinn claims that nineteenth-century Americans, including Latter-day Saints, were much more accepting of what is now tagged homosexual behavior or conduct than Saints are today. Quinn would actually have his readers believe that early Latter-day Saint leaders not only tolerated behavior that amounted to sodomy but at times also even encouraged it. He also claims that the church is unfortunately involved in a terrible “descent into homophobia,”⁴ by which he does not mean dread or fear of men,


⁴ The University of Illinois Press has used this currently fashionable political language in its promotional literature. See, for example, the inside fold
but disapproval of various erotic acts between those of the same sex.

Quinn claims that the current leadership of the church has moved away from the more tolerant stance of nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints. Contrary to what Quinn claims, we will show that the current leadership of the church is holding fast to moral teachings firmly rooted in scripture and that their response to the currently fashionable “gay” and lesbian political agenda, which includes, among other things, the moral justification of sodomy, is entirely consistent with the teachings of past leaders and with the scriptures. In contradiction of Quinn’s claims, LDS leaders have always held that sexual acts are morally appropriate only between husband and wife. All other sexual relations, whether they are heterosexual or homosexual, have always been seen as violations of moral discipline, and hence unworthy of Saints.

Judging Quinn by His Own Standards

We will not address in any detail Quinn’s attempt to morally justify homosexual acts by perpetuating the currently fashionable political mythology of a special homosexual identity. However, readers of his book should be aware of Quinn’s trendy new political agenda. Our focus will be on Quinn as historian and not Quinn in one of his other roles, though these cannot, of course, ultimately be separated. We will direct our attention to Quinn’s treatment of the beliefs and practices of Latter-day Saints and to those parts of the book that will most concern them. As applied to the Saints and to the leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we find Quinn’s arguments to be equivocal, conceptually confused, often baseless, and ultimately absurd.

In his role as apologist for homosexual conduct, Quinn has become a mythmaker. In scrutinizing this mythology, we will

of the dust cover for *Same-Sex Dynamics*. To see exactly where Quinn’s treatment of “same-sex dynamics” is headed, the reader should consult Quinn’s final chapter, which is entitled “From Relative Tolerance to Homophobia in Twentieth-Century Mormonism” (pp. 366–400). And on the inside back fold of the dust cover we find Quinn’s editors asserting that Quinn demonstrates that “they”—Latter-day Saints generally and LDS leaders in particular—“were remarkably tolerant of homoeroticism until the mid-1950s.” This most questionable opinion is exactly the main point of Quinn’s book.
employ his own standards of what constitutes fraudulent and dishonest history. He insists that those he denigrates as "traditional Mormon historians" are involved in fraud and are dishonest precisely because he thinks they suppress or manipulate textual evidence. He insists that writers are certainly "dishonest or bad historians" if they fail to acknowledge the existence of even one piece of evidence they know challenges or contradicts the rest of their evidence. If this omission of relevant evidence is inadvertent, the author is careless. If the omission is an intentional effort to conceal or avoid presenting the reader with evidence that contradicts the preferred view of the writer, that is fraud, whether by a scholar or non-scholar, historian or other specialist. If authors write in scholarly style, they are equally dishonest if they fail to acknowledge any significant work whose interpretations differ from their own.5

We will demonstrate in detail that Quinn, from his own perspective, has been dishonest in advancing his homosexual agenda; what he has produced, instead of being competent, honest history, is an instance of fraud.

In the account of well-known nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints, Quinn has offered his readers quotations that are sometimes obviously wrenched out of context and paraphrases that often distort the meaning of crucial texts. In addition his summaries and conclusions go far beyond a reasonable reading of the textual evidence. To put it bluntly, he cheats. We will demonstrate that he suppresses or ignores abundant contrary evidence. Through the use of insinuation and innuendo he strives to give a false impression of the actions and teachings of respected Latter-day Saints of the past. Rather than focus on the jargon-ridden, ideological staging for his attack on the current leadership of the church—signs of which appear here and there in his book, particularly in his final chapter (pp. 366-403) and also in his rather

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bizarre “Chronology of Same-Sex Issues in American and Mormon Culture” (pp. 405–43)—we will concentrate our attention on the way Quinn selects and then distorts what he considers evidence; hence we will call into question both his competence as a historian and his honesty. We will judge Quinn by standards that he has set forth and on which he insists. In so doing we employ his own emotionally charged vocabulary.

**Quinn’s So-Called Neutrality and Functional Objectivity**

Quinn has made a fetish of his supposed “functional objectivity,” faulting others for their alleged lack of it.\(^6\) But some of his primary sources are more forthcoming about themselves—they do not pretend to be neutral or objective—than he is about himself. Many of Quinn’s guesses about alleged incidents of Latter-day Saint homosexuality appear to have been borrowed from a 1994 essay by Rocky O’Donovan.\(^7\) Quinn refers to O’Donovan as a “self-proclaimed ‘Gay’ radical” (p. 395 n. 72) and claims that his “contributions to gay and lesbian Utah history cannot be overstated” (p. 80 n. 19). Quinn cites O’Donovan frequently (see pp. 69, 77 n. 17, 129 n. 62, 194 n. 111, 242, 243, 260 n. 89, 328, 385 n. 15, 386 n. 18, 389 n. 28, and 391 n. 44).

O’Donovan claims that he was “academically trained as a historian,” but he also reports, “that is not a role with which I am

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6 Quinn, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *The New Mormon History*, vii–xx. Unfortunately for Quinn, his discussion of objectivity shows little understanding of the function of such language, or of the history of the debate over either its possibility or desirability. For a knowledgeable treatment of the mythology of objectivity, see Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Quinn cites this book (see his “Editor’s Introduction,” ix n. 10), but he seems not to have understood Novick’s arguments and their application to his own ideology. Just as Novick has shown, Quinn follows a number of less-than-perceptive historians who have claimed neutrality, detachment, or objectivity in an effort to warrant their own accounts of the past and to denigrate the efforts of others, whose work is described as partisan or politically motivated.

comfortable. . . . I consider myself a social activist, theorist, and poet.” O’Donovan also grants that it is “important that readers know of my agenda, since I do not subscribe to the theory of academic objectivity.” Quinn has not been forthcoming about his social or political agenda. Though certainly no poet, Quinn has also assumed the role of social activist, while all the time claiming to be entirely neutral and “functionally objective,” whatever that means. We are not alone in finding basic flaws and lack of objectivity in *Same-Sex Dynamics*. For example, one of Quinn’s reviewers notes that “there are places where Quinn’s reading of nineteenth-century notions adopted by the Mormons is driven by his desire to make the theory fit the case.” Another reviewer concluded that “as a disciplined and objective historical study of lesbians, gays, sexual issues, and Mormon culture, [Quinn’s] volume has serious drawbacks.”

Quinn’s political agenda includes a possible follow-up book dealing with homosexual behavior among former Latter-day Saints. Advertising in “gay” magazines, Quinn asks former Mormons, gentiles, and even current Latter-day Saints to send for a survey that would take four hours to complete, in which they are to relate their sexual experiences to facilitate Quinn’s comparison of the “family, religious, social, and sexual experiences of 2000 living Mormons and non-Mormons.” Out of this sex survey, which is 271 pages long and includes 1,245 questions, Quinn is planning to fashion “the sequel to the 1996 book *Same-Sex Dynamics*.”

Quinn sends his scurrilous sex survey out with a cover letter inviting homosexual recipients to encourage their “gay,” lesbian, and bisexual friends to request copies. Whatever else it might be, this instrument is not social science, since the participants are self-selected, rather than at random. Social scientists typically describe such self-selection as “snowballing.” But Quinn seems to imagine that he is suddenly capable of doing genuine survey research. For

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8 Ibid., 123.
10 Peter Boag, *New Mexico Historical Review* 72/3 (July 1997): 265.
virtually all purposes his unscientific approach will invalidate whatever results he may attain.

Problems of Style and Terminology

*Same-Sex Dynamics* offers a babel in which traditional language is replaced by a new terminology heavily laced with homosexual implications. Those who have adopted this kind of terminology have done so in an effort to advance a social and political agenda hostile to values shared by the Judeo-Christian tradition, as well as by Islam. While we recognize the common and ongoing change always occurring in any language, and the right of groups to use language to meet their needs through the formation of a new or specialized vocabulary, it is important when communicating with others to use language that will be clearly understood. Quinn creates his own special vocabulary to deal with non-erotic gender matters, and also both overtly homosexual and heterosexual conduct. The result is terminological confusion. Often throughout *Same-Sex Dynamics* one can never be sure when Quinn intends a non-erotic, heterosexual, or homosexual interpretation of conduct. The resulting confusion was reflected by the public in Utah’s Cache and Weber Valleys when Quinn’s book was first publicized by Salt Lake City Associated Press reporter Vern Anderson. Between 7 March and 4 August 1996, for example, Cache Valley citizens protested and disputed Quinn’s historical method and claims. A preliminary survey of Logan, Utah’s *Herald Journal* respondents showed them to be holders of doctoral, master’s, and bachelor’s degrees. Yet Quinn claimed that he had been misunderstood. At best, Quinn’s jargon fails to communicate his ideas clearly. In addition, he writes with a gossipy tone, filling his text with innuendo and insinuation.

12 Klaus Hansen has labeled Quinn’s terminology “Quinnspeak”; see his accompanying review of *Same-Sex Dynamics* on pages 132–40.


14 See, for example, the following 1996 letters to the editor printed in the *Logan (Utah) Herald Journal*: Karen Berg Roylance, 7 March; Rhett S. James, 10 March; Betty Hammond, 12 March, 12 April, 4 August; Richard Gordon, 13 March; Alfred Pace, 17 March; Glen Roylance, 17 March; D. Michael Quinn, 24 March, 25 April; and Tom Cherrington, 7 April 1996.
Beyond the murky jargon, we find numerous factual errors, many of which we will examine in detail.

For example, when Quinn refers to same-sex dynamics is he merely describing same-gender relationships, or is he identifying erotic behavior? His terminology is often nebulous and ambiguous. “Same-sex dynamics” is as ambiguous as “male-male intimacy,” which Quinn used in the title of his essay in Dialogue. “Same-sex dynamics” may refer to any relationship between father and son, mother and daughter, brothers, sisters, Boy Scouts, priesthood bearers, Relief Society sisters, missionaries, and so forth. A more appropriate term for the way Latter-day Saints describe these relationships might be same-gender rather than same-sex. Same-gender implies a full spectrum of human relationships and not just “sexual” ones. Quinn’s jargon often is employed in ways that suggest or hint at “homoeroticism.” Almost any relationship between those of the same gender may, in “Quinnspeak,” take on a sexual or erotic significance, as if there were no other aspects to life. Quinn would have fared better had he used the Greek references to love: godly love (agape), brotherly love (philia), and erotic love (eros). Homosexuality, for all the gravity of the issues it raises, is treated in a matter-of-fact style, in which serious things are made to seem commonplace. Quinn thus strives to color the Mormon past with erotic and sexual significance.¹⁵

Quinn alleges that “rather than focusing on the erotic, [his] study emphasizes the full range of same-sex dynamics among Mormons born in the nineteenth century” (p. 2). But he immediately turns his attention to erotic behavior. He employs “a slew of

¹⁵ Quinn also seems to adhere to the now questionable statistic that ten percent of the population is “homosexual” (p. 4). This notion is based on the flawed study by Kinsey in 1948. Homosexual apologists have adopted that figure, which makes it appear that a fixed and significant percentage of the body politic was involved in homosexual behaviors, in an effort to advance their own political and social agenda. A more recent, government-sponsored study puts the actual number closer to one percent. See Charles W. Socarides, *Homosexuality: A Freedom Too Far* (Phoenix: Margrave Books, 1995), 64–67. For a discussion of and reaction to the survey of the Battelle Human Affairs Research Centers, see Priscilla Painton, “The Shrinking Ten Percent: A New National Survey Claiming That Only 1% of Men Are Gay Has Put the Movement Off Stride,” *Time* (26 April 1993): 27–29.
post-modern categories," many of which he has apparently coined. Quinn’s jargon does not appear to have precision as its purpose. Instead, his terminology invites ambiguity. He writes history with terms such as homoaffectionalism, homocultural, homoemotional, homoenvironmental, homoerotic, homomarital, homopastoral, homophobia, homoromantic, homosocial, and homotactile. In effect, Quinn “homo” the traditional dictionary.

Quinn’s sexual language is Janus-faced and distorts the meaning and intent of many of the historical documents he cites. He often uses these terms in a way to suggest the “homoerotic,” but he is merely suggestive and hence can back off when challenged. He thus is prepared to claim that he did not actually mean what he appeared to suggest.

The reader must not assume that Quinn’s notes support his claims. “The footnotes often outweigh the text,” and “there is a great deal of scholarly overkill,” observes one reviewer. We would go beyond this observation. Many of Quinn’s notes are undependable; and many are merely bibliographies that a reader might consult, but which do not support Quinn’s argument. Much of what Quinn cites is simply not germane to the discussion. The volume of Quinn’s notes gives the appearance of scholarly depth, but they are often bloated, filled with mere fluff and misrepresentation. Quinn supplies a large bibliography on sexuality in America, which appears early in his notes. How these essays relate to Quinn’s argument is not obvious. We are skeptical of his bibliographical notes. We think it imperative for the reader to check Quinn’s notes carefully on any given point and not rely on Quinn’s representation of a document’s contents or meaning.

Misrepresenting the Teachings of Early Latter-day Saint Leaders

Quinn creates false impressions in his treatment of prominent Mormon leaders. We will discuss his treatment of the Prophet Joseph Smith, his successor Brigham Young, and George Q. Cannon—a prominent nineteenth-century apostle and longtime...
member of the First Presidency. Quinn attempts to imply that they encouraged homosexual conduct. This he does by taking their words or actions out of context and by using innuendo and speculative ambiguities. Quinn’s “evidence” in regard to these leaders is meager, inadequate, and often inaccurate. He often is forced into strained interpretations. He seems to have combed the written record for indications of anything that might be used to show that Latter-day Saint leaders favored or approved of sodomy. It turns out that he has found nothing that points definitively to homosexuality.

When Quinn’s speculations first emerged, either through his essay in Dialogue or from the announcement in the press of his forthcoming book, a storm of protest ensued in the form of “letters to the editor” in several Utah newspapers. It was not the press, but the public, that first recognized Quinn’s misrepresentations. At that time it became apparent that his work would create serious misunderstandings about Mormon leaders and their teachings and about other persons featured in his essay and his book. Quinn defended himself, saying that “the article did not claim Joseph Smith or Brigham Young were homosexual.” He went so far as to blame the public for misunderstanding him, but he created such false impressions by his own subtle insinuation.

While Latter-day Saints may resist Quinn’s sophistry, it seems that the academic and especially the homosexual worlds will be enthralled by his claims. The initial publicity Quinn’s book has

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20 George L. Mitton replied to Quinn’s letter, saying that “the many letters [in the press] in response show either that he did not make himself clear about his claims, or that the public fell for his innuendo and gained the very impression he intended to engender.” “Quinn’s Research Both Shallow and Skewed,” Logan (Utah) Herald Journal, 2 April 1996, 6.
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received gives some indication of the confusion and misunderstanding it is likely to induce in non-Mormon circles. From publications that are influential in informing librarians, booksellers, and those responsible for providing book notices and reviews in the press, we get some indication of how it is likely to be received, and how it is being promoted:

1. Quinn "argues that the Mormon Church in 19th century America was actually very tolerant of same-sex relationships. . . . founder Joseph Smith . . . openly accepted homoerotic relationships." 21

2. "Quinn takes a fascinating look into the rise of proscriptions against same-sex relationships in 19th-century and early 20th-century Mormonism. Quinn's controversial thesis is that, contrary to contemporary teaching, the Mormon church once accepted and condoned same-sex relationships and that these relationships were practiced by church leaders." 22

3. "Quinn . . . has written a book that is nothing short of astonishing. Who could have possibly imagined the tolerance with which same-sex relationships were accepted by the Mormon Church . . . [He] demonstrates, with thorough documentation, several examples of long-term relationships among Mormon same-sex couples and the environment in which they flourished. His extraordinary accomplishment is especially notable for the subtlety of his claims and the nuanced interpretation he gives them, all supported by exhaustive documentation." 23

The following quotations are from magazines directed to persons with a homosexual point of view. It is important to note that each of these writers not only had access to Quinn's book, but interviewed him about it for their articles. Quinn thus had an opportunity to prevent or correct misunderstandings. Furthermore, apparently neither homosexual tabloid was aware of a debate within the University of Illinois Press over whether to advertise Quinn's book as Mormon history or homosexual history—two areas in which they specialize.

21 Publishers Weekly, as quoted on the dust jacket—showing that even the University of Illinois Press misunderstands because of Quinn's innuendo; emphasis added.
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) doesn’t tolerate in the slightest those of us who tread on life’s sexual outskirts. There is a rich history to this animosity—a history that paradoxically begins with the church’s onetime support for same-sex affection. . . . It wasn’t always this way. According to historian Quinn’s illuminating new book, same-sex love and intimacy, expressed in a variety of nonerotic ways, was common among the Mormons and throughout America in the 19th century. Sexual relations between people of the same gender were also common and, while technically “sinful,” seemed to be understood as a fact of life—heterosexual adultery was of graver concern.24

In our judgment no greater hoax has been put over on the academic community (since the work of forger Mark Hofmann) than D. Michael Quinn’s book Same-Sex Dynamics. Jeff Ofstedahl illustrates how Quinn’s book misleads and misinforms:

It seems ironic that a church whose founder advocated the idea of men sleeping together would, some 150 years later, be working tirelessly in its quest against homosexuality to further its modern-day moral/political agenda. . . . Was Joseph Smith a bisexual? “You have to realize that Smith was a man of his times,” Quinn told the Echo in an interview. Same-sex emotional and physical intimacy was just as much a part of the Mormon culture as it was the American culture in the 19th century.25

It is evident that Quinn’s book has the potential to cause widespread confusion and false perception. We cannot in this essay respond to every false perception that has arisen or is likely to arise as a result of Quinn’s shoddy scholarship, but we will provide representative examples of his dubious methodology.

Joseph Smith and the Arms of Love

Since the early days of the church, Latter-day Saints have faced a barrage of false claims about Joseph Smith. Despite the efforts of the Saints to respond to these charges, they are parroted by their enemies to deceive the unwary. Now, as a result of Quinn’s book, we should not be surprised to see another wave of preposterous claims emerge. The opining by homosexual activists that we have already quoted provides some indication of the potential harm that may come from Quinn’s propaganda.

We will first scrutinize Quinn’s claims about what Joseph Smith “taught” (p. 231). Quinn quotes a passage out of context from one of Joseph’s sermons. (As we will soon show, the context changes the meaning significantly.) Quinn claims that the Mormon prophet “advocated” having “same-sex bedmates,” or that he “encouraged same-sex friends” to sleep in the same bed, conversing with “loving pillow talk” (pp. 89, 381). This is, of course, Quinn’s language, and not Joseph Smith’s. It illustrates Quinn’s common pattern of quoting someone and then paraphrasing in such a way as to distort that meaning. Quinn quotes from the sermon of 16 April 1843 as it was reflected in the notes of LDS apostle (and later president) Wilford Woodruff (pp. 87, 89, 409-10):

> two who were vary friends indeed should lie down upon the same bed at night locked in each other[’s] embrace talking of their love & should awake in the morning together. They could immediately renew their conversation of love even while rising from their bed.28

Quinn then quotes a parallel passage from the History of the Church, based on the notes or recollection of LDS apostle Willard Richards (pp. 87, 99 n. 19, 232, 379, 381, 410):

26 D&C 123 makes it mandatory that the Saints gather this literature and provide responses.
27 Quinn, “Male-Male Intimacy,” 110 n. 15.
it is pleasing for friends to lie down together, locked in
the arms of love, to sleep and wake in each other’s em­
brace and renew their conversation. (p. 379)29

Quinn uses these citations throughout his book, claiming that in
both “same-sex bedmates” are “described by the prophet”
(p. 99 n. 19). Then, without evidence to support his assertion,
Quinn concludes that “the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith en­
joyed bedtime snuggling with male friends throughout his life”
(p. 87).

Quinn also repeatedly claims that Joseph Smith “revised the
common interpretation that God destroyed Sodom because its in­
habitants preferred sex between men” (pp. 268, 269, 276, 409),
substituting instead a “nonsexual interpretation of Sodom’s
destruction” (p. 412). Quinn sees Joseph Smith’s well-known
confession of his own minor youthful failings as a “same-sex”
issue (p. 409), although Joseph’s comments do not appear to refer
to sexual matters of any kind (see Joseph Smith—History 1:28).
Further, Quinn sees the Wasp, a newspaper at Nauvoo, as claiming
that John C. Bennett “engaged in sodomy,” that “Joseph Smith
had tolerated Bennett’s homoeroticism,” and that it “even printed
one apostle’s implication that Joseph Smith himself had also en­
gaged in an ‘immoral’ act with a man” (p. 266).

All Quinn’s claims are expressed in a matter-of-fact style as
though beyond question. However, it is the responsibility of the
historian to inform readers of critical background and especially
to help those who know little about Joseph Smith’s history and
teachings. This Quinn fails to do, and we will show how that dis­
torts his interpretation.

The fundamental incompatibility between Quinn’s Joseph
Smith and the texts he employs begins with the real Joseph’s re­
markable teachings on marriage and the family. These teachings
have their origin in the Bible: “It is not good that the man should
be alone; I will make him an help meet [i.e., proper or suitable]

29 History of the Church, 5:360–62. Compare Quinn, “Male-Male Inti­
macy,” 110. Richards’s original text can be found in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon
W. Cook, eds., The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the
Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies
Center, 1980), 194–96.
for him. . . . Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife," and the man and woman, having been created "in the image of God," received a commandment to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 2:18, 24; 1:27–28). Much of this was repeated by Jesus, who stressed its importance by adding that "what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:4–6).

It must be understood that in the early days of his ministry, Joseph Smith received a reaffirmation of the truth of these biblical principles by revelation from heaven (Moses 2:26–28; 3:18, 24; Abraham 4:26–28; 5:14, 18). Joseph Smith and the church did not regard these commandments as discretionary, disdaining them as deriving from old Hebrew myths and legends of a simpler day (see Joseph Smith—History 1:24–25). The preservation of these truths from the distant past was, instead, seen as providential, and their reaffirmation as a witness that they apply with equal force in our times, to be neglected at our peril.

Joseph Smith went beyond this in his later teachings on the eternal nature of the marriage covenant between a man and woman when entered into under divine authority. As a part of this covenant, there would be an opportunity for the faithful to participate in God’s creative work and to enjoy an eternal increase in their progeny. Hence the Lord said: "prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same. . . . for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory" (D&C 132:3–4), adding that the glory spoken of in the day of resurrection "shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever . . . for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified" (D&C 132:19, 63). Revelations given through Joseph Smith near the end of his life not only stressed the importance of male-female marriage and family, but magnified that importance by anticipating the eternities to come.

We have summarized these teachings because Quinn fails to do so and because they are essential to an understanding of the discourse of Joseph Smith from which Quinn takes his notion of "same-sex bedmates." When we see what Joseph Smith’s discourse was really about, Quinn’s interpretation turns out to be
nonsense. The passage Quinn quotes is from a funeral sermon in which Joseph stressed the reality of the resurrection and sought thereby to bring comfort to the bereaved. This sermon was important, although the written record of it is incomplete. B. H. Roberts, considering this very sermon, wrote: "I would again remind the reader that these reports of remarks and discourses of the Prophet's are imperfect, having been written in long-hand, and in part from memory and therefore really are only synopses of what was said."30 The longest written account of this sermon is two or three pages,31 although "President Smith preached about two hours."32 In such a situation it is imperative to seek corroboration from Joseph Smith’s teachings on other occasions. Since Quinn can find nothing to support his peculiar reading of fragmentary reports of a long sermon in any of Joseph Smith’s other sermons, letters, or other writings and recollections, one must be very cautious in considering Quinn’s speculation. It turns out that Quinn’s interpretation is without justification, since it contradicts all Joseph Smith’s well-documented teachings.

Four accounts of this funeral sermon from the journals of persons who heard it have been located. Levi Richards merely says, "Pres Smith preached on the resurrection &c ...." All agree that the basic topic was the resurrection, a fact that Quinn barely mentions in an endnote (p. 99 n. 19; compare p. 410). William Clayton’s brief entry is significant:

Heard Pres. J[oseph Smith] preach on the resurrection shewing the importance of being buried with the saints & their relatives in as much as we shall want to

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31 All accounts are found in Ehat and Cook, Words of Joseph Smith, 194–99.
32 History of the Church, 5:363.
33 Ibid., 198. Rhoda Richards also recorded in her diary that “Brother Wd [Willard Richards] says he has heard the sweetest sermon from Joseph he ever heard in his life.” Ibid., 199.
see our relatives first & shall rejoice to strike hands with
our parents, children &c when rising from the tomb.34

Clayton reports that Joseph Smith advocated that family and
friends should try to arrange to lie down (that is, be buried to-
gether) in nearby graves, so they can rejoice together as they
come out of their graves at the resurrection. Joseph bases this very
literal concept of the resurrection on a vision he had seen, and
"aside from this discourse and the teachings given in the temple,
no other account of Joseph Smith's vision exists."

The vision seems to have influenced all his later teachings. For example, only
a few days before this sermon was given, he taught that "When the
Savior shall appear we shall see him as he is. We shall see that he is
a man like ourselves. And that sociality which exists among us
here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal

glory, which glory we do not now enjoy" (D&C 130:1–2).

The following from the History of the Church, based on Will-
lard Richards's account, shows Quinn's excerpt from Joseph's
sermon in italicized type in the context in which it should appear:

I will tell you what I want. If tomorrow I shall be
called to lie in yonder tomb, in the morning of the res-
urrection, let me strike hands with my father, and cry,
"My father," and he will say "My son, my son," as
soon as the rock rends and before we come out of our
graves.

And may we contemplate these things so? Yes, if
we learn how to live and how to die. When we lie down
we contemplate how we may rise in the morning; and it
is pleasing for friends to lie down together, locked in
the arms of love, to sleep and wake in each other's em-
brace and renew their conversation.

Would you think it strange if I relate what I have
seen in vision in relation to this interesting theme?
Those who have died in Jesus Christ may expect to

34  Ehat and Cook, Words of Joseph Smith, 198, spelling as in original.
35  Ehat and Cook, Words of Joseph Smith, 278.
enter into all that fruition of joy when they come forth, 
which they possessed or anticipated here.

So plain was the vision, that I actually saw men, be-
fore they had ascended from the tomb, as though they 
were getting up slowly. They took each other by the 
hand and said to each other, “My father, my son, my 
mother, my daughter, my brother, my sister.” And 
when the voice calls for the dead to arise, suppose I am 
laid by the side of my father, what would be the first 
joy of my heart? To meet my father, my mother, my 
brother, my sister; and when they are by my side, I em-
brace them and they me.36

Joseph Smith describes a scene of intense joy—a family scene. 
The use of the expression the arms of love is significant, for it is a 
scriptural allusion referring to the love with which the Lord 
surrounds the faithful, at the resurrection or otherwise (2 Nephi 

Wilford Woodruff’s account yields the same results. Again 
Quinn’s selective excerpt is in italicized type:

Considered Nauvoo would be a burying place for the 
Saints & Should he die he considered it would be a 
great Blessing to be buried with the saints & esspecially 
to be buried with his father yes he wanted to lie by the 
side of his father that when the trump of God should 
sound & the voice of God should say ye Saints arise 
that when the tomb should birst he could arise from the 
grave & first salute his father & say O my father! & his 
father say O my son!! as they took each other by the 
hand he wished next to salute his brothers & sisters & 
then the Saints . . . the bodies will be caught up to meet 
the Lord & the Saints will all be brought together 
though they were scattered upon the face of the whole 
earth yet they would not as readily salute each other as 
though they lay down & rose up together from the 
same bed, To bring it to the understanding it would be

36 History of the Church, 5:361–62, emphasis added. Compare Ehat and 
Cook, Words of Joseph Smith, 195–96.
upon the same principle as though two who were vary friends indeed should lie down upon the same bed at night locked in each other embrace talking of their love & should awake in the morning together they could immediately renew their conversation of love even while rising from their bed but if they were alone & in sperate apartments they could not as readily salute each other as though they were together ... I saw the graves open & the saints as they arose took each other by the hand ... & great Joy and glory rested upon them.37

The expression vary friends indeed38 in Woodruff’s account has special significance. Quinn interprets it as meaning “same-sex” friends. However, the accounts say nothing about “same-sex” anything. What was on Joseph’s mind when this discourse was given? In the revelation on eternal marriage, the Lord had told Joseph to “prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you” (D&C 132:3). The time had come to begin the preparation of the people to receive the new understanding, and a knowledge of the doctrine of a literal resurrection provided the essential first step. In this very discourse he said it “is my meditation all the day ... to know how I shall make the Saints of God comprehend the visions that roll like an overflowing surge before my mind. ... Let these truths sink down in our hearts, that we may even here begin to enjoy that which shall be in full hereafter.”39 Joseph Smith seems to have chosen funeral sermons to introduce new teachings. This sermon appears to have been his attempt to prepare them for his understanding of eternal marriage and family that was to follow.

And Quinn is also in error when he says that the sermon

never once mentioned husband-wife relationships ... remarkable in a sermon on loving relationships in this life and in the resurrection during which the prophet repeatedly spoke of “brothers and friends,” fathers

38 “Vary” is Woodruff’s usual spelling of “very” throughout his journal. See editor’s note at ibid., 3:370.
39 History of the Church, 5:362.
and sons, mothers, daughters and sisters. Smith’s silence concerning husbands and wives was deafening in this sermon about attachments of love . . . but I do see that as the first Mormon expression of male bonding” (p.139).

Do not mothers and fathers, seen together in eternal glory, reflect such relationships? Joseph also said in the same sermon: “To Marcellus Bates let me administer comfort. You shall soon have the company of your companion in a world of glory.” This is “the closest allusion to the doctrine of eternal marriage the Prophet had yet made in public discourse.”

What then did Joseph Smith or Wilford Woodruff mean by “vary friends indeed”? The intensity of the friendship expressed, and the setting in which it appears, refers to husband and wife. While today the word “friend” normally refers to persons who are not relatives, that was not the way Joseph Smith used the word. He regarded the marriage of husband and wife as that of eternal and loving friends. Compare the following expressions to his wife Emma, written over a period of years in several letters when he was away from home:

I am your sincere friend and husband.

I feel for you for I know you[r] state and that others do not but you must comfort yourself knowing that God is your friend in heaven and that you have one true and living friend on Earth your Husband.[]

Dear Emma do you think that my being cast into prison by the mob renders me less worthy of your friendship[?]

Oh Emma . . . do not forsake me nor the truth but remember me, if I do not meet you again in this life may God grant that we may meet in heaven, I cannot express my feelings, my heart is full, Farewell Oh my

40 History of the Church, 5:363.
41 Ehat and Cook, Words of Joseph Smith, 279 n. 11.
kind and affectionate Emma I am yours forever your husband and true friend.

Oh my affectionate Emma, I want you to remember that I am a true and faithful friend, to you and the children, forever, my heart is intwined around your[s] forever and ever, oh may God bless you all amen. 

Wilford Woodruff's use of the word friendship is even more helpful in determining its meaning at that time. Woodruff was married to Phoebe Carter at the home of Joseph Smith in 1837. The following references to matrimony and friendship are found in excerpts taken from his journal account of the wedding day when they and others were married. He seems to anticipate in some measure the doctrine of eternal marriage:

Marriage being an institution of heaven & honourable in all, [we] accordingly accepted the honour ... by joining hands ... in the bonds of matrimony and took upon ourselves the marriage Covenant. ... While all nature smiled without[,] friendships purest joys were felt beneath a prophets roof where brides and bridesgroom found a welcome reception, While by law with the nuptial cord their hands were bound their congenial hearts in one, lay cemented bearing the seal of Eternal life. Their friendship formed from principle pure, virtue unsull[i]ed, bid refinement oe'r those hearts to rule, possessing the love of God the ownly foundation of true friendship.

... Being clothed in the spirit through the power of the priesthood he pronounced upon the wedded heads and their posterity blessing[s] that ne'r decay.

While heaven smiles upon the Elders of Israel[,] friendship presents each with a bride as a help meet.

O heaven protect the four that they their covenants may fulfill that friendship may grow old But pure and

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42 The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, comp. and ed. Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 350, 253, 409, 362-63, 368, emphasis added.
strong as death that peace and harmony may crown their lives. Let God direct their steps[,] their hearts possess his love[,] while personal *friendship* joins their hearts and hands in one. May light and truth their way direct until they meet the great bridegroom.\(^{43}\)

Woodruff inscribed as a heading “Matrimony” at the beginning of the account of his wedding, and at the end placed a Latin phrase like a seal, and which appears thus: *Vera amicitia est sem-piterna* [true friendship is eternal].\(^{44}\) Woodruff later used language much like Joseph Smith in referring to his “wife & friend”—she was his “Companion & friend,” or “my companion whom God hath given me for a bosom friend & a helper-meet.”\(^{45}\) Husbands and wives are thus the “vary friends indeed.” But Quinn reads “same-sex bedmates” into the reports of Joseph Smith’s sermon.

Quinn’s assertion that Joseph Smith “enjoyed bedtime snuggling with male friends throughout his life” (p. 87) is gratuitous. This is one of Quinn’s deft ambiguities; this statement has no basis in fact. He offers two examples of Joseph sleeping near another man. We should not be surprised if there were other occasions, for his own evidence shows how crowded homes often made such sleeping arrangements necessary in Joseph Smith’s day (pp. 87–91). But it does not necessarily follow that Joseph “enjoyed” the tight quarters. In Quinn’s first example we find young Joseph Smith in the Knight home, boarding with a large family while he worked at the farm and sawmill. Of this, Joseph Knight Jr. said that his “father hired many hands. In 1826 he hired Joseph Smith, Jr. *Joseph and I worked together and slept together. My father said Joseph was a man of truth and the best hand he ever hired.*”\(^{46}\) Quinn reads this as evidence of something erotic, ignoring the hyperbole and folk poetry expressed by friends

\(^{43}\) Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 1:140–41, emphasis added, and spelling as in the original.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., 1:140–41.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 1:181, 193, 219.

working in a material or spiritual cause. Such crude literalism creates images that distort history.

In Quinn’s other example we find Joseph lying on the floor in the jail at Carthage, Illinois, the night before his martyrdom. Here is Dan Jones’s own account, with Quinn’s selection of words (p. 87) in italics:

Late, we retired to rest, Joseph and [his brother] Hyrum on the only bedstead while 4 or 5 lay side by side on mattresses on the floor, Dr. Richards sitting up writing until his last candle left him in the dark; the report of a gun, fired close by, caused Joseph whose head was by a window, to arise, leave the bed and lay himself by my side in close embrace; soon after Dr. Richards retired to the bed and while I thought all but myself and heaven asleep, Joseph asked in a whisper if I was afraid to die. “Has that time come think you? Engaged in such a cause I do not think that death would have many terrors,” I replied. “You will see Wales and fulfill the mission appointed you ere you die” he said. I believed his word and relied upon it through trying scenes which followed. All the conversation evinced a presentiment of an approaching crisis.48

In the History of the Church we read that Joseph Smith

lay himself on the floor, having Dan Jones on his left, and John S. Fullmer on his right. Joseph laid out his right arm, and said to John S. Fullmer, “Lay your head on my arm for a pillow, Brother John;” and when all were quiet they conversed in a low tone about the prospects of their deliverance. Joseph gave expression to several presentiments that he had to die, and said “I

47 Quinn arbitrarily changes this to “in a close embrace,” a form not found in the text.
48 Dan Jones to Thomas Bullock, 20 January 1855, in Ronald D. Dennis, ed., “The Martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith,” BYU Studies 24/1 (1984): 101, spelling and punctuation as in the original. Jones was to fulfill the prophecy, going to Wales and bringing in about four thousand converts, including the family of Evan Stephens discussed below.
would like to see my family again." and "I would to God that I could preach to the Saints in Nauvoo once more."49

Our readers must judge whether this was a likely setting for a tryst. The incident seems rather to show the nobility of Joseph Smith’s character and that of the honorable men with him.

Quinn claims that Joseph Smith “revised the common interpretation that God destroyed Sodom because its inhabitants preferred sex between men” (p. 268). This claim needs an appropriate burial. It is true that, in a very special context, Joseph said that Sodom and Gomorrah “were destroyed for rejecting the Prophets,”50 but Joseph was giving a talk on the kingdom of God and how it is present whenever God sends his messengers. He taught that “in consequence of rejecting the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Prophets whom God hath sent, the judgments of God have rested upon people, cities, and nations, in various ages of the world,” and that this was true of Sodom.51 Joseph said that at one time Sodom rejected prophets. This rejection was reflected in their transgressions. All transgressions, sexual and otherwise, are included within Joseph Smith’s language.

Quinn refers to the “Protestant claim that Sodom perished due to sexual sins” (p. 269). This statement of the “common interpretation” is oversimplified. The “common interpretation” also acknowledges other sins at Sodom. The sexual sins Quinn mentions were considered especially “abominable.” The interpretation is based on several biblical texts, from both the Old and New Testaments, which Joseph Smith and the Saints have continued to embrace. Joseph’s understanding can be illuminated by a review of the appropriate passages in his “translation” of the Bible, in which he furthered the “common interpretation.”52 For example, in Romans 1:24–32, Joseph Smith strengthened Paul’s condemnation of homosexual conduct, using the word inexclus-

49 History of the Church, 6:600–601, punctuation as in the original.
50 History of the Church, 5:257.
51 History of the Church, 5:256.
52 We discuss below in greater detail Joseph Smith’s opposition to homosexuality under the heading “Consistency of Church Teachings on Homosexuality,” but cite here one example of Joseph Smith’s disgust for homosexuality written elsewhere in his interpretation of the Bible.
able. These are matters pertaining to an accurate understanding of Mormon moral doctrine. Yet Quinn tries to make it appear that Joseph Smith did not think that Sodom’s sexual misbehavior was sinful. This is indefensible. Quinn misinforms his readers by withholding the context.

John C. Bennett and “the Mormon Hierarchy”

Though John C. Bennett’s career at Nauvoo is well-known, a brief summary is necessary to provide a setting for what we wish to say about Quinn’s special use of the Bennett affair. B. H. Roberts describes Bennett as “the ‘Benedict Arnold’ of The Church at Nauvoo.” Coming to Nauvoo with apparently good credentials, “Dr.” Bennett soon ingratiated himself with the Saints. Bennett was given responsible positions in the community, in the church, and at the University of Nauvoo. He defended the church in writing and speeches. But Bennett fell into sexual transgression, refused to repent, and was discharged from the university and excommunicated from the church. Thereupon, he embarked on a career of lectures and writings against the church and its leaders. His most infamous effort was a book he published in 1842. Bennett purported to expose the sexual misconduct of Joseph Smith and his associates, or as Bennett chose to call them—“the Mormon Hierarchy.” Actually, Bennett tells us more about himself than about the Saints, which, of course, also seems to be the case with Quinn.

Illinois Governor Ford said of Bennett that he

was probably the greatest scamp in the western country. I have made particular enquiries concerning him, and have traced him in several places in which he had lived before he had joined the Mormons in Ohio,

53 The most complete account of Bennett is the recent biography by Andrew F. Smith, The Saintly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of Dr. John Cook Bennett (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997). Quinn endorses this work on the dust jacket.

54 Roberts, Rise and Fall of Nauvoo, 73.

55 John C. Bennett, The History of the Saints; or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842).

56 Ibid., 257, 217, emphasis added.
Indiana and Illinois, and he was everywhere accounted the same debauched, unprincipled and profligate character. He was a man of some little talent, and then [1840–41] had the confidence of the Mormons, and particularly their leaders.57

One historian reports the following about the effects of Bennett’s attacks on the Saints after his departure from Nauvoo:

It was the sensational journalism of the day and provoked a wave of anti-Mormon feeling in the Middle West. In the fall of 1842 Bennett published his book in Boston and quickly received national attention. . . . Such lurid attacks not only influenced a credulous reading audience in the 1840’s, but have had a continuing influence upon many historians who have accepted them as valid judgments by reliable contemporary observers. Historians ought to have known better (probably some of them did). The literature of exposé gives little insight into the Mormon movement, but it does provide a clue to the origins and character of anti-Mormon feelings which reached a fever pitch on a number of occasions in the nineteenth century.58

Consider the following absurd, self-contradictory, and extravagant passage from Bennett’s book, in which he claimed that “the Mormon Hierarchy” were

guilty of infidelity, deism, atheism; lying, deception, blasphemy; debauchery, lasciviousness, bestiality; madness, fraud, plunder; larceny, burglary, robbery, perjury; fornication, adultery, rape, incest; arson, treason, and murder; and they have out-heroded Herod, and

out-deviled the devil, slandered God Almighty, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Angels.59

Bennett overplayed his hand with his lurid language and descriptions. John Taylor said of Bennett:

I was well acquainted with him. At one time he was a good man, but fell into adultery, and was cut off from the Church for his iniquity . . . he then went lecturing through the country, and commenced writing pamphlets for the sake of making money, charging so much for admittance to his lectures, and selling his slanders. His remarks, however, were so bad, and his statements so obscene and disgraceful, that respectable people were disgusted.60

Quinn uses Bennett to suggest that Joseph Smith was indifferent about homosexual conduct, when in reality the evidence underlines Joseph’s strong opposition to it. Quinn asserts, as though it is a certainty, that the “first known instance of homoerotic behavior in Mormon history involved John C. Bennett” (p. 266). This was more than a decade after the organization of the church, and, if true, would demonstrate a low incidence of homosexual sin. Quinn goes on to say that the Nauvoo Wasp “claimed that Bennett had . . . engaged in sodomy,” as well as heterosexual adultery (p. 266). But the evidence of Bennett’s homosexual conduct is not at all as certain as Quinn would have us believe. The statement in the Wasp speaks of Bennett’s “adultery, fornication and—we were going to say (Buggery),”61 a tentative and guarded suggestion or suspicion. Andrew Smith notes that “no support for this charge was offered, and perhaps it was made in the heat of battle.”62 Quinn claims that Samuel W. Taylor “was the first modern writer to assert that Bennett had homoerotic relationships at Nauvoo” (p. 291 n. 13). Andrew Smith touches on this:

59 Bennett, History of the Saints, 257.
60 History of the Church, 5:81.
Before Bennett left Nauvoo, [Joseph] Smith visited [Francis] Higbee and found him in a bed on the floor. The editor of the *Times and Seasons* [John Taylor] refused to print the next part of Joseph Smith’s testimony, stating that it was “too indelicate for the public eye or ear” and was “revolting, corrupt, and disgusting.” Samuel W. Taylor concluded that the only charge that was worse than what was already published was sodomy. Taylor presumed that Higbee was with Bennett on the floor. Since Bennett never denied the charge, perhaps he was a bisexual.63

Quinn should face the consequence of his agreement with Samuel Taylor. The Saints in Nauvoo regarded “homoerotic relationships” as “revolting, corrupt, and disgusting.” These words of John Taylor fly in the face of Quinn’s unfounded claim that Latter-day Saint leadership “regarded sodomy as far less serious than fornication or adultery” (pp. 270, 288).

Quinn’s only other purported evidence of Bennett’s possible involvement in homosexual practices at Nauvoo is a comment of Brigham Young, which we again quote with Quinn’s excerpt in italics: “I told Dr. Bennett[t] that one charge was seducing young women, and leading young men into difficulty—he admitted it—if he had let young men and women alone it would have been better for him” (p. 268).64 Quinn sees this as “Young’s reference to John C. Bennett’s bisexual conduct” (p. 268), but it is more likely a reference to his participation in and encouragement of adulterous heterosexual practices, and possibly to abortion (see p. 268). Bennett, Quinn says, was excommunicated “for seducing a group of women whom he had also encouraged to have sex with anyone he sent to them” (p. 266). This sounds like prostitution involving men and women. Quinn later cites only the “young men” part of the quotation, but that gives a false impression of the text (p. 270).

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64 *Times and Seasons* 5 (15 May 1844): 539.
The delay in excommunicating Bennett offers Quinn the opportunity to claim that “Joseph Smith had tolerated Bennett’s homoeroticism” (p. 266). But if there was a delay, it applied to all of Bennett’s transgressions. Joseph Smith later regretted the delay, which he agreed to on the basis of Bennett’s tearful pleading and promises to reform.⁶⁵ It must be remembered that Bennett had also done good and useful things. The Lord had said that Bennett’s “reward shall not fail if he receive counsel” and “I have seen the work which he hath done, which I accept if he continue” (D&C 124:16–17). This seems to have encouraged Joseph to seek Bennett’s repentance.

Quinn also thinks that the adoption of a principle at Nauvoo that no one could be found guilty unless proven by two or three witnesses could be “construed as [Joseph’s] toleration for Bennett’s various sexual activities . . . a burden of proof [that] helped shield Bennett’s sexual exploits” (p. 267, 408). This is conjecture. The rule applied to any crime, not just sexual transgressions. And the principle of witnesses was rooted in the Bible and reaffirmed in latter-day scriptures.

Quinn alleges that the church newspaper printed Elder Orson Pratt’s “implication that Joseph Smith himself had also engaged in an ‘immoral act’ with a man” (p. 266). This is Quinn’s interpretation, and not Pratt’s. A careful reading of the text and its background yields a different understanding of Pratt’s remark, which is taken from the brief minutes of a long public meeting held in Nauvoo on 22 July 1842. The purpose of the meeting was to consider the slander by Bennett—“the reports gone abroad, calumniating the character of Pres. Joseph Smith.”⁶⁶ A resolution was presented to about one thousand, and all but two or three voted to affirm Joseph Smith’s moral character. Orson Pratt, who was disaffected from Joseph at the time, voted against the resolution. His disaffection resulted from falsehoods told by Bennett—Pratt thought that Joseph had acted improperly with his wife while he was away on a mission. Pratt explained at length his negative vote. Joseph then spoke in reply and asked Pratt the following:

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⁶⁶ Times and Seasons 3 (1 August 1842): 869.
“Have you personally a knowledge of any immoral act in me toward the female sex, or in any other way?”

Answer, by Elder O. Pratt, “Personally, toward the female sex, I have not.”

Quinn holds that the words “in any other way” are an allusion to homosexual conduct. Joseph Smith's obvious purpose was to help Pratt see that he had become disaffected because of Bennett's lies. “Have you personally a knowledge of any immoral act in me toward the female sex, or [information received] in any other way?” Pratt admits that all he has is gossip. This interpretation fits the historical setting, while Quinn's does not. For in the long discussion about what Bennett had done, leading up to the minutes in the *Times and Seasons*, no mention of a charge of homosexual conduct was made by Bennett. Moreover, Bennett's slanderous book, with all the catalog of sins and crimes attributed to Joseph, does not include the charge of homosexual acts.

Quinn also neglects to indicate that when this brief exchange between Joseph Smith and Orson Pratt was first published a few days earlier, it read simply: “Question, to Elder Pratt—'Have you personally a knowledge of any immoral act in me?' Answer, by Elder O. Pratt—'[']Personally, I have not.'”

When the expanded version appeared, it was explained that “a mistake occurred in the minutes . . . inadvertently omitting some qualifying words in the question of Pres. Joseph Smith to Elder O. Pratt, and in his reply. The omission was without design and the proper corrections are [now] made.” Clearly the intent of the change was to be more specific than the general term “immoral” and to respond to Bennett's charges of immorality with women. Certainly the Brethren who published the augmented version did not see it as adding to the charges against Joseph Smith, as Quinn's strained interpretation demands.

After his fellow apostles counseled with him, Pratt saw his error and renewed his friendship with Joseph; he defended Joseph

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69 *Nauvoo Wasp*, Extra, 27 July 1842, 2.
Smith’s character the rest of his life. In his study of Pratt, T. Edgar Lyon noted that Pratt’s disaffection was a matter in which [Pratt] took no pride, and tried to forget. On one occasion, however, while speaking in Plano, Illinois, he told of this trial he had undergone at Nauvoo. . . . He said that it was because he had received his “information from a wicked source, from those disaffected,” that he had turned against the Prophet. When he learned “the truth,” he was satisfied. The “wicked source” could have been no other than Bennett. 70

All this occurred while Joseph Smith was introducing the doctrine of plurality of wives that had been revealed to him (D&C 132). At least in a preliminary way, Bennett was aware of this teaching. Bennett misled women with his own adulterous, irresponsible, and undisciplined version, promising he would marry, but having no intention of doing so. Thus “Joseph Smith’s doctrine of plural marriage and Bennett’s counterfeit version were . . . taught simultaneously and in secret at Nauvoo.” 71 The result has been much confusion, and Quinn’s ill-considered claims can only add to it.

Brigham Young and the Society of Women

Quinn informs us that Brigham Young was so “homosocial” that he preached that “there are probably but few men in the world who care about the private society of women less than I do” (pp. 66, 111, 413). As Quinn did with Joseph Smith, he also sets a stage to make it appear that Brigham was either unconcerned about or even favorable toward homosexual conduct. What Brigham Young said is as follows:

71 England, Orson Pratt, 77.
I will acknowledge with brother Kimball, and I know it is the case with him, that I am a great lover of women. In what particular? I love to see them happy, to see them well fed and well clothed, and I love to see them cheerful. I love to see their faces and talk with them, when they talk in righteousness; but as for anything more I do not care. There are probably but few men in the world who care about the private society of women less than I do. I also love children, and I delight to make them happy.\footnote{Journal of Discourses, 5:99; Quinn’s excerpt in italics.}

Brigham Young clearly stressed that his love for women is genuine and godly, and not based on lust. Lust is a temporary thing, and essentially selfish, without proper concern for the long-term well-being of the object. The doctrine Brigham taught stresses true and godly love as an eternal thing, with deep and abiding concern for the welfare of the beloved.\footnote{Consistent with this is the possibility that Brigham Young had in mind the “private society of women” as the stewardship of women, versus his role of provider, to which he alludes in the passage.} Brigham Young was mindful that he was not talking only to the Saints, but says in the same address that “our sermons are read by tens of thousands outside of Utah.”\footnote{Journal of Discourses, 5:99.} Brigham spoke against the fierce opposition to plural marriage, an opposition which often claimed in lurid and insulting terms that the practice was based on lust. Brigham was sensitive to these charges and wanted it understood that plural marriage was motivated by religious considerations, and not by lust for “the private society of women.” A talk by Heber C. Kimball, printed immediately before Brigham Young’s sermon, reflects this concern also:

Plurality of wives! ... Suffice it to say I have a good many wives and lots of young mustards that are growing, and they are a kind of fruitful seed.... It is so with “Mormonism;” it will flourish and increase, and it will multiply in young “Mormons.” “To be plain about it, Mr. Kimball, what did you get these wives for?” The Lord told me to get them. “What
for?” To raise up young “Mormons,”—not to have women to commit whoredoms with, to gratify the lusts of the flesh, but to raise up children. . . . The great men of the earth keep two to three, and perhaps half-a-dozen private women. They are not acknowledged openly, but are kept merely to gratify their lusts. 75

Quinn’s use of Brigham Young’s language seems wide of the mark. He garbles the historical setting, twisting it to fit his purposes. We must stress the obvious heterosexual orientation of a man who had many wives and was the father of fifty-seven children (pp. 111, 122 n. 19). Brigham Young was a defender of marriage, and of the sacred nature of family relationships. In the Nauvoo period, when Brigham Young became the leader of the church, he stressed the strong scriptural basis for marriage:

Besides repentance, baptism, reception of the Holy Ghost, and many other essentials, the UNION of male and female, both temporal and spiritual, is of as much importance before God as all the rest; for the man is not without the woman, neither is the woman without the man in the Lord. And again, what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder, for the especial reason, that all contracts for time and eternity, have to be made while we sojourn in the flesh: “In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage[,]” but the great lineage, through the priesthood, and the everlasting Covenant sealed on earth, and sealed in heaven, continues throughout all generations. 76

Again, later in Utah, Brigham Young emphasized the importance of marriage:

I wish the whole people of the United States could hear me now[.] I would say to them, let every man in the land over eighteen years of age take a wife, and then go to work with your hands and cultivate the earth,

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or labor at some mechanical business, or some honest trade to provide an honest living for yourselves and those who depend upon you for their subsistence; observing temperance, and loving truth and virtue; then would the women be cared for, be nourished, honored and blest, becoming honorable mothers of a race of men and women farther advanced in physical and mental perfection than their fathers. This would create a revolution in our country, and would produce results that would be of incalculable good. If they would do this, the Elders of this Church would not be under the necessity of taking so many wives.\textsuperscript{77}

We have quoted Brigham Young's words to show how he represented the scriptural principle of marriage. He repeated such counsel many times. In all of Brigham Young's numerous sermons and writings, Quinn finds only one isolated passage that he wrenches out of context and then misconstrues in his own peculiar way. Quinn relies on insinuation and innuendo to make it appear that Brigham Young departed from these teachings in practice. The following will illustrate Quinn's technique.

Quinn turns to phrenology, a pseudoscience of the nineteenth century, to suggest that Brigham Young was among those who "had phrenological charts with higher scores for same-sex Adhesiveness [friendship] than for opposite-sex [attractiveness] . . . [a] ratio that phrenologists regarded as potentially 'unnatural'" (pp. 110–11). Quinn then concludes that "since Mormons were familiar with phrenological interpretations, they were not surprised by Brigham's public statement that he was less interested in 'the private society of women' than most men were" (p. 111). How does Quinn know that Latter-day Saints were not surprised?

From a helpful study of Mormon interest in phrenology, it is evident that the fad affected some Latter-day Saints along with the rest of society.\textsuperscript{78} Many of the curious solicited phrenological readings or "delineations" based on measurement of the skull, and some placed credence in them. But Joseph Smith and

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Journal of Discourses}, 12:194.
Brigham Young did not advocate phrenology. Joseph’s chart was copied into his history, but Joseph said he gave it a place there “for the gratification of the curious, and not for respect to Phrenology.” Brigham was anything but complimentary when referring to his experience with phrenology. Interest gradually waned, as with “the fading of phrenology’s scientific [respectability] it lost its appeal.” Quinn, however, makes much of the casual dabbling in phrenology by some of the Brethren, using it to enhance his homosexual agenda.

Next Quinn peeps into Brigham’s private life to learn that “despite fathering fifty-seven children, Young had a reputation for ignoring the emotional and sexual needs of his wives” (p. 111). Reputation with whom? Quinn’s prime witness is Ann-Eliza Young, the wife of Brigham who left him and wrote an “exposé,” billing herself on the title page as “Brigham Young’s Apostate Wife.” Commercially motivated, she wrote in the genre of dime novels or historical fiction. Quinn cites several passages from her book (p. 122 n. 19), but her gossipy and extravagant claims defy belief. Before placing confidence in her, Quinn should have taken seriously Hugh Nibley’s long and devastating review of her purpose, her book, and its historical reliability. Of course, a literature praising Brigham’s model home life does exist. One would, however, expect to find some tensions and feelings of neglect in such a large family, particularly where the husband and father wrestled with matters of church and state. Some tensions are found in most monogamous families, but to

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79 Ibid., 43, quoting the handwritten version in the LDS Church Archives; compare History of the Church, 5:55.
80 Bitton and Bunker, “Phrenology among the Mormons,” 53.
81 Ibid., 58.
82 One reviewer stressed this sentence as his example of Quinn’s innu­endo. Byron C. Short, Christian Century 114/2 (15 January 1997): 57.
83 Ann Eliza Young, Wife No. 19, or The Story of a Life in Bondage, Being a Complete Exposé of Mormonism, and Revealing the Sorrows, Sacrifices and Sufferings of Women in Polygamy (Hartford: Dustin, Gilman, 1875).
85 Clarissa Young Spencer, Brigham Young at Home (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1940).
find some of these in Brigham Young’s family is not grounds to assume, without further evidence, that he was emotionally alienated from his wives and family by same-sex attraction.

Quinn thinks that “dancing in pioneer Mormon society was unique in America because Brigham Young and other LDS Church leaders sometimes organized male-only dances” (p. 86). So did Jewish men, mountain men, Native Americans, sailors, miners, Civil War soldiers, and others separated from women by employment or ritual. Such behavior among the Saints was part of a broader cultural context and not unique in America. When Brigham was leader at Nauvoo, “Mormon men danced with other men at church headquarters in Nauvoo—often in the LDS temple there” (p. 85). What is Quinn’s purpose here? What does he want his readers to think was Brigham’s purpose? Dancing was considered a wholesome form of recreation and exercise, and the types of dances seldom involved more physical contact than most athletic contests do now. The Saints joined in activities regarded as “harmless dances.” At Nauvoo, the dance had a religious and even ritual dimension: “The spirit of dancing increased until the whole floor was covered with dancers, and while we danced before the Lord, we shook the dust from off our feet as a testimony against this nation.” In Utah, Brigham said: “Those that have kept their covenants and served their God, if they wish to exercise themselves in any way, to rest their minds and tire their bodies, go and enjoy yourselves in the dance, and let God be in all your thoughts in this as in all other things.” Consider also this account of Brigham Young’s company en route to Utah:

In this company of one hundred and forty eight there were only three women, and these were married. Many forms of amusement were participated in, including some rough-and-tumble dancing in which the men whirled one another about. . . . Brigham called his company together and said, “I have let the brethren

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88 *Journal of Discourses*, 6:149.
dance and fiddle ... night after night to see what they will do.” He spoke sharply to them of excesses in all things.89

Brigham Young sought to keep dancing within proper bounds. Several times he curtailed dancing when it appeared to be lacking in decorum.90 He thought that the brethren must be “praising the Lord in the dance.”91 Quinn may have intended something entirely nonerotic when he refers to such all-male dances. If so, his meaning is obscured by his frequent use of homosexual language to describe a clearly heterosexual world.

Quinn makes an irresponsible claim concerning Brigham Young’s position on homosexual adultery: “If Young regarded homoerotic activities as sins (and I [Quinn] know of no evidence that he ever made such a statement), he apparently regarded sodomy as far less serious than fornication and adultery” (p. 270). Apparently? No evidence whatsoever supports this misleading claim. Brigham Young opposed all adulterous relationships, and sodomy is certainly one of them that is strongly condemned in the scriptures. Quinn tries to support his reading with a discussion that is essentially inaccurate, if not dishonest.

First Quinn says that Brigham’s “earlier statements [at Nauvoo] about Bennett’s ‘young men’ showed that Brigham Young was not shy about referring publicly to sodomy” (p. 270). Well, Brigham was not shy about expressing his view on any topic. It is highly unlikely he was speaking of anything but heterosexual transgressions, and Quinn’s brief reference to “young men” is deceptive when the original text mentions both “young men and women.”92

Quinn tries to make it appear that Brigham Young did not care whether there was legislation in place to deal with sodomy when the Mormons were established in the West (pp. 272-73). This is rubbish, because as soon as they undertook to have a penal

90 Elden J. Watson, Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1846-1847 (Salt Lake City: Watson, 1971), 3, 9, 265, 537, 546, 555.
92 Times and Seasons 5 (15 May 1844): 539.
code, sodomy was included as a crime. When the provisional State
of Deseret enacted a penal code in early 1851, it had a clause to
the effect that, "if any man or boy shall have, or attempt to have,
any sexual intercourse with any of the male creation, on convic-
tion thereof, they shall be deemed guilty of Sodomy, and be fined
or imprisoned, or both, as the court may direct."93 Quinn was
aware of this, for he cites this study in another connection (p. 296
n. 41). He simply withholds the fact that such legislation was en-
acted at an early date. Brigham Young was personally concerned
about the establishment of the criminal code, and it "was no new
idea; it seems to have been in process of development for over a
year. Thus, on January 23, 1850, it is recorded that Thomas
Bullock read to Brigham Young 'a criminal code written by
George A. Smith.'”94 Incidentally, this is a use of the word
"sodomy" six or seven years before what Quinn claims was "the
first known use by Mormons" (p. 271).

The influences on the development of morals-related legisla-
tion under Utah's new territorial legislature are somewhat con-
fused by the interaction with Federal authority, the belief in set-
tling many problems by church courts, and the use of statutory
language to prosecute for plural marriage in ways not intended
when the legislation was adopted by the Latter-day Saints. Clearly,
"Mormon opposition to judicial functioning in the territory was
not an objection to the legal system as such but resulted from their
fear that non-Mormons would control the courts and use the law
as an instrument of persecution."95 Quinn does not offer a help-
ful analysis of this situation.96 Brigham Young and the legislature
could not have seen homosexual offenses as a pressing and
immediate problem, since such offenses were virtually unknown
among them. Quinn himself makes a list of "nineteenth-century
Mormons who chose to have homoerotic experiences," and, after

93 Dale L. Morgan, "The State of Deseret," Utah Historical Quarterly
8/2-4 (1940): 216.
94 Ibid., 108.
95 Michael W. Homer, "The Judiciary and the Common Law in Utah Ter-
96 A study without Quinn's bias is Orma Linford, "The Mormons, the Law,
and the Territory of Utah," American Journal of Legal History 23 (1979):
213-35.
the conjectural incident of John C. Bennett at Nauvoo, he does not find another instance until 1876, the year before Brigham’s death (p. 362). When in 1864 a non-Mormon “committed an abominable outrage” on a young boy, Brigham said the judge found that “our legislators, never having contemplated the possibility of such a crime being committed in our borders, had made no provision for its punishment, and the criminal had to be discharged.”

Utah’s territorial legislature was made up of men who had limited experience in the development of legislation, and they had reason to be concerned about how their legislation would be construed by the courts. To some extent, it was a trial-and-error process. It is probable that the legislators felt that their more general language on “adultery, seduction, fornication, and lewd and lascivious cohabitation” would have been adequate. When the penal code was reviewed and reenacted, the California Code was used as a convenient model from a larger jurisdiction that had had more experience with the development of legislation and with criminal matters. The Deseret News explained in an editorial:

The members of the Salt Lake bar disapproved of the old penal statutes of this Territory, which, passed at different sessions of the Legislature, were scattered through the books and were inconvenient in form, as well as inadequate to the requirements of the Territory in its advanced condition and its mixed society, consequent upon the influx of a different class of population from its early settlers. A Penal Code was therefore drawn up, or rather adapted from the California statutes.

Quinn claims that the Utah legislature adopted the law against “every person who is guilty of the infamous crime against nature,” not because “of any Mormon concern about same-sex intercourse,” but because “it was part of the California code that Utah Territory adopted in its entirety” (p. 273). This is mere conjecture, unsupported by anything in the historical record. The

97 Millennial Star 27 (7 January 1865): 14.
same Deseret News editorial tells how the proposed code was reviewed by the legislature and the legal community in Utah and was changed and adapted as needed. There would have been ample opportunity for the removal or modification of unwanted language. Quinn's discussion of Brigham Young and legislative history is typical of his shabby methodology. He leaves a distorted impression of Mormon intentions.99

George Q. Cannon and the Concept of Godly and Brotherly Love

Quinn uses a brief fragment from a discourse of George Q. Cannon to create a false impression by failing to mention the context of the talk, except to say that it was delivered on “Utah Pioneer Day in 1881” (p. 113). Quinn seems to want readers to believe that Cannon’s subject was homosexual “male bonding” (p. 139), “male-male love” (p. 113), and that he “praised male-male love” or “male-male intimacy.”100 These terms are, of course, Quinn’s—not Cannon’s. Once again Quinn employs the sexually ambiguous language of “bonding,” “love,” and “intimacy,” each of which has a broad spectrum of possible meanings. In the context of Cannon’s remarks, however, the references are to same-gender “non-erotic” relationships such as father-son, brother-brother, mother-daughter, sister-sister, and “brother and sister” Christian fellowship. Quinn may insist that he never intended homosexual meanings. But, if so, we have another example of his use of misleading, fuzzy language.

The context of Cannon’s speech is crucial. The Pioneer Day setting was most appropriate for the discourse. Cannon’s long and remarkable sermon is actually about the gathering of the Saints from many parts of the world, their willingness to uproot and leave their homes in response to the gospel call, and the impressive community love and unity Latter-day Saints enjoyed despite their varied backgrounds. Cannon speaks of the “gathering” and “oneness” of the people as taught to Joseph Smith by God, and

99 For a contemporary discussion of the continuity of morals legislation from the early period, see “Utah Laws against Sexual Crimes,” Deseret Evening News, 23 February 1882, 2.
100 Quinn, “Male-Male Intimacy,” 110.
as found in the teachings of Jesus to the first apostles. He sees this as the working of the Spirit of God among the people and as a witness of the truth of Latter-day Saint claims to divine authority. Cannon’s discourse touches on the concept of true and chaste brotherly love and sisterly love in the gospel.

The following is an extended quotation from the passage from which Quinn takes his Cannon fragment (pp. 113, 417), again with the language he quotes shown in italics:

There is one thing that distinguishes the Latter-day Saints from every other people that I know anything about . . . and that is, they love one another. It is not in name, it is not a profession of love, but they a people that love one another so strongly that they are willing to die for each other if it is necessary, and it is that deep and abiding love that binds them in union. Travel among the “Mormons” wherever you will, . . . this love is a distinguishing characteristic of the people, you behold it everywhere. Men may never have beheld each other’s faces and yet they will love one another, and it is a love that is greater than the love of woman. It exceeds any sexual love that can be conceived of, and it is this love that has bound the [Mormon] people together. It has been a cement that all the persecution, all the tribulation, and all kinds of trial could not dissolve or break; and the extraordinary feature of it all is . . . that this people who are thus bound together . . . are as diverse as it is possible to get the human family to be. . . . But who is there that asks among the “Mormons” or Latter-day Saints as to a man’s nationality? Who is it asks where a man or woman came from? . . . [They are] all living together as brothers, full of love for each other; none of that rancorous feeling that exists between nationalities is to be witnessed in

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101 For example: “And even so will I gather mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, even as many as will believe in me, and hearken unto my voice” (D&C 33:6); and “I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27); see also John 17.
Utah Territory. . . . What is it, then, that makes this people united? It is the outpouring, as I testify, of the Spirit of God . . . and these are the fruits of that spirit. . . . Jesus prayed in the last great prayer that he offered unto his Father that his disciples might be one even as he and his Father were one.103

Cannon's doctrine had a strong scriptural basis, as he explained on another occasion:

"A new commandment I give unto you," said Jesus to his disciples before his death, "that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" [see John 13:34–35]. This was to be so distinctive a trait, that by its presence men might know his disciples from those who had no claim to the title. Love, abiding and unchangeable, through the enjoyment of which men would lay down their lives for their friends [see John 15:13], was to be an accompaniment of the gospel of Jesus, and was the fruit of the Spirit he bestowed upon his followers. . . . The apostle John, also, gives the love the disciples had for their brethren as a sign, by which they might know they had passed from death unto life [see 1 John 3:13–16].104

This oneness was observed by Charles Dickens, who visited a Mormon emigrant ship as it was preparing to sail from England in 1863. Dickens was impressed with the quality of the people, as well as their order and discipline. There were eight hundred Mormon converts on board, and Dickens saw them as the "pick and flower of England."105 Dickens concluded his account with the following observation:

103 Ibid., 365–66.
104 George Q. Cannon, Writings from the 'Western Standard' (Liverpool: Cannon, 1864), 86.
I afterwards learned that a Despatch was sent home by the captain before he struck out into the wide Atlantic, highly extolling the behaviour of these Emigrants, and the perfect order and propriety of all their social arrangements. . . . I went on board their ship to bear testimony against them if they deserved it, as I fully believed they would; to my great astonishment they did not deserve it; and my predispositions and tendencies must not affect me as an honest witness. I went over the [ship’s] side, feeling it impossible to deny that, so far, some remarkable influence had produced a remarkable result, which better known influences have often missed.106

Dickens was also impressed by the Mormon agent he met on the ship.107 It was George Q. Cannon, who supervised over 13,000 converts in their emigration and was well aware of the “remarkable influence” or brotherly love at work.108

The “remarkable influence” observed by Dickens is the subject of Cannon’s Pioneer Day discourse. But Quinn quotes Cannon out of context. He infers that Cannon’s remarks contained homosexual overtones, although no basis for that inference is present when the complete text is considered. Quinn goes on to say, in regard to Cannon’s remark that the love he spoke of “exceeds any sexual love,” that Cannon “emphasized the platonic [or “nonerotic”] dimension of this male-male love” (p. 113). By saying Cannon “emphasized” the “nonerotic” dimension, Quinn suggests to the reader that Cannon may also have recognized an erotic dimension. Cannon actually spoke of a love and influence that is godly, brotherly, and without any erotic dimension.

106 Ibid., 402. For the background of this piece, see William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen, eds., Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers (New York: Knopf, 1958), 334–35. It is odd that this compilation did not include the meaningful closing passage quoted above.


Quinn recognizes a biblical allusion from the Old Testament, when Cannon says that “they will love one another, and it is a love that is greater than the love of woman” (p. 113). The allusion is to the love of David and Jonathan: “thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women” (2 Samuel 1:26). Quinn observes that one biblical interpretation apparently made among some is that David and Jonathan were “sexual lovers,” but he admits that “because David was a teenage polygamist and Jonathan fathered at least one child, most Bible readers and scholars regard [them] as platonic (or nonerotic) lovers” (p. 113). Cannon’s interpretation is like that held by most Hebrew scholars and the vast majority of others. Cannon held that the relationship of David and Jonathan was the godly love he saw manifested among the Mormon people. An understanding of this is needed to place the real Mormon view of brotherly love in stark contrast to the unreasonable homosexual interpretation proposed by Quinn.

Because our interpretation of the love of David and Jonathan will be important in a later portion of our essay, we now include the following passage from another of Cannon’s discourses, given several years later, which employs the same biblical imagery:

When men receive the everlasting Gospel and the Priesthood, there is a love begotten in their hearts for their fellowmen such as they never have felt before. Like the love of Jonathan for David, it is “passing the love of women.” It is stronger than the love of women. It overpowers it. Not that it quenches the love of women or makes it improper; but it is a greater love, it surpasses it. This is [also] the love that enters into the hearts of women who embrace the Gospel, and causes them to love the Elders of this Church as they never loved any one before. And it is a pure love. They love them as they would angels from heaven. It is not an unvirtuous love. It is a love that comes from God. It is the love of the Holy Ghost, the love of purity, the love of truth, the love that we would have for holy beings—a part of the love that we have for God Himself, and for our Lord and Savior Jesus. This love unites them together with a bond and strength of affection that was never known before. The restoration of this Gospel to
the earth has begotten a new love among mankind. It is a love that comes from God Himself, and it is poured out upon His children, and it makes us one, when we cherish it as we should do. It makes us love one another as no other beings upon the face of the earth can love, because . . . it is the love of God.109

Cannon's language involves a straightforward interpretation of the brotherly love of David and Jonathan and of the love of brothers and sisters in the community of Saints. It has no erotic implication.

A Witness against Quinn's Thesis

Quinn devotes an entire chapter to an uncompleted essay by Mildred J. Berryman, written in the 1920s and 1930s.110 According to Quinn, Berryman was a "lesbian," and she may have had a Mormon background. Berryman described her interviews with persons of her own acquaintance who spoke with frankness of their homosexual interests and conduct. Quinn entitles his chapter "The Earliest Community Study of Lesbians and Gay Men in America: Salt Lake City" (p. 195), and holds that "Berryman stands alone as an early interpreter of an American homosexual community" (p. 206). This may explain why Quinn treats the study at some length, since by doing this he garners the recognition of publishing a more detailed account of a study that had previously only been summarized briefly. It also affords him the opportunity to suggest, with his chapter title, that the Saints were homosexual pioneers of some sort. But Quinn undermines his own position when he finds that the Berryman study is "the only source for the views and experiences of early Utahns and Mormons who regarded themselves as homosexual" (p. 195, emphasis added). Despite the title of his book, Quinn is now well past the

110 Quinn cites the study as follows: "Mildred J. Berryman, 'The Psychological Phenomena of the Homosexual,' rough-typed on the back of stationery of the American Red Cross, Salt Lake City, Utah, with the last page of the study dated 13 November 1938, in the June Mazer Lesbian Collection, West Hollywood, California" (pp. 77, 148, 223, 360).
nineteenth century, and one also wonders about the impression of certainty which he leaves about persons of that time who were not even remotely involved in such a study.

Importantly, Berryman’s study emboldens Quinn to engage in an unrestrained discussion of homosexuality in a Utah setting. Whatever value the Berryman study may have as a rare and early source on the self-perception of those interviewed, it is certainly of doubtful value in establishing Quinn’s basic hypothesis, either in regard to Mormons or to Americans at large. The “community” Quinn mentions is not Salt Lake City as a whole, but Berryman’s own limited circle of contacts over a “decades-long” period (p. 429) and perhaps from more than one locality. Nothing in her study indicated that the standards or teachings of the LDS Church influenced the behavior of those interviewed, nor did Berryman consider their sexual conduct in relation to the beliefs and practices of Latter-day Saints. The study included data on twenty-five women and eight men, and surely does not reflect an early twentieth-century Mormon toleration of homosexual conduct in any way. What it does accomplish is to open a window on the past that exposes how mistaken Quinn’s basic thesis really is.

Berryman’s manuscript was first described in 1977 by Vern and Bonnie Bullough, friends of Berryman who are well-known for their interest in the area of human sexuality and the history of homosexuality. The manuscript was willed to them after the death of Berryman, since she had lived for thirty years with Bonnie Bullough’s mother (p. 226). The Bulloughs were well-informed about Berryman’s circumstances; they claim that they


112 Berryman claimed to have been married twice, early in her life, but Quinn was unable to verify that (pp. 78, 196).
"often visited the two women, and M. B. [Mildred Berryman] frequently mentioned her manuscript, considering it her most precious possession, although she made no further move to finish it. . . . Her plan and the hope of our mother was that we would publish the findings . . . and thus help M. B. achieve her lifelong goal of making a contribution to the literature of lesbianism without endangering her privacy or the anonymity of her informants."  

This passion for anonymity and a solicitude for others are reflected throughout Berryman’s study and in the treatment of her by the Bulloughs, who use only her initials. Such anonymity points to the lack of tolerance toward homosexuality in Utah and among Latter-day Saints. It is odd that Quinn fails to see this.

Quinn’s discussion of Berryman leaves the reader uncertain and confused and is full of contradictions. Quinn is in radical disagreement with the Bulloughs on important points, despite their firsthand knowledge and their obvious passion for writing about sexual matters. Thus Quinn insists that Berryman was a Mormon as a way of linking Latter-day Saints with homosexuality. Quinn’s evidence for a Mormon link is drawn from the early part of Berryman’s life. If she was a Mormon, it is probable that she was excommunicated, since she was clearly not a believer but an apostate. She is said, by the Bulloughs, to have “identified herself as a lifelong Episcopalian,” and they note that “her hatred of the Mormons grew with each passing year” (p. 200). At the time of her death, Berryman was a member of yet another church.  

114 For evidence of Berryman’s LDS membership, Quinn found a Mildred Berryman in the LDS Patriarchal Blessing Index and in the LDS Church census for 1930, evidence which the Bulloughs consider “made up data” (pp. 226–27). Quinn omits the information that the census card reads “not on record,” which must mean that, while living within the LDS ward area, she did not associate with the church, and perhaps was unknown by it there until she was visited during the census. The waters are further muddied by the possibility of another Mildred Berryman, since the LDS Family Search file lists one born six years earlier than the one Quinn claims to follow, and for whom a marriage is also shown. For Berryman’s non-Mormon affiliation with the Bountiful Community Church at her death, see notices in Deseret News, 8 November 1972, E-4, and Bountiful (Utah) Davis County Clipper, 10 November 1972, 4; 17 November 1972, 17.
Bulloughs strongly insisted that Berryman was not a Latter-day Saint, expressing “astonishment and disbelief” at the contrary suggestion (p. 226), and explicitly requested that their dissent on this and other matters be included in Quinn’s book (p. 228). They hold that “to call her a Mormon [at any point in her life] would be a disservice to the LDS Church and to what [she] stood for” (p. 228). Vern Bullough said that Berryman “was never a Mormon. . . . She regarded Mormons as inferior to her and was, to put in a word, a vile anti-Mormon”; he also declared that saying she was a Mormon “contradicted statements by Berryman” herself over a thirty-year period (p. 226). Quinn simply ignores Vern Bullough’s opinion.

The Bulloughs also believe Berryman’s study was started a decade later than Quinn surmises (p. 224). And the Bulloughs “are certain . . . that not all people in the study were Mormons and that [Berryman] herself certainly was not” (pp. 227–28). Quinn would have us believe that “many (possibly all) the persons in her study were of Mormon background,” when only one clear reference to that effect appears among all the interviews in her study (pp. 197, 362). Moreover, there does not appear to be any direct information in the Berryman study to show the position of the church in relation to any of Berryman’s people. The Bulloughs explained their understanding that while the “Mormon church . . . excommunicates homosexuals,” it “never moved against any of the Mormon members of the group or, to our knowledge, any of the other lesbians at that time” precisely because of their “success in disguising their sexual orientation.”115 By that disguise, any “Mormons” in the group were surely attempting to avoid a church response to their apostasy. Such would reflect clear censure and nonacceptance of homosexual behavior.

Even the venue of the study is clouded, because Berryman placed on the title page of her manuscript the following: “A Thesis Prepared by M. J. Berryman for Doctor of Philosophy for the Temple Bar College, Seattle Washington” (p. 224). Quinn thinks that she “gave her study a misleading subtitle that implied she had conducted it in Seattle, rather than in Salt Lake City” (p. 196). He can find no evidence for such a college, nor even a

115 Bullough and Bullough, “Lesbianism in the 1920s and 1930s,” 901.
correspondence school. Vern Bullough sees the title page as showing that Berryman "hoped to use one of the fly-by-night mail-order houses to get a degree, something she very much wanted, and which she sometimes pretended to have" (p. 225). Quinn concludes that "Berryman used the title page to disguise the fact that Salt Lake City was the location of the homosexual community" in her study, and that it supplies "further evidence of her concern about preserving the anonymity of her lesbian and gay friends" (p. 224). But why should that be necessary, if the Latter-day Saints were tolerant of homoerotic behavior, as Quinn suggests? Quinn imagines that the "Temple Bar" reference is an allusion or "inside joke about the fact that the sexually active homosexuals of Berryman’s study were barred from the temple of the LDS Church" (p. 224). However extravagant Quinn's suggestion may be, it is at least a tacit admission by him that Latter-day Saints did not tolerate or condone homosexual conduct, and hence it contradicts his central thesis.

It is astonishing that Quinn tries to use the Berryman study to further his own homosexual agenda. The study is plagued with problems of accuracy, veracity, and "serious bias"—as Quinn himself admits, a "bias . . . so intrusive that it raises obvious (but unanswerable) questions about how representative her participants were of her community’s lesbians and gay men at the time" (p. 205). An important thing that Quinn, Berryman, and the Bulloughs all appear to agree on is that the Berryman study involved persons with a great "fear of exposure." It was a concern possibly intensified, as the Bulloughs say, "because the community was located in [Mormon-influenced] Salt Lake City, a city not then or now as tolerant of homosexuality as the larger metropolitan cities." Berryman "had an overwhelming fear of exposure and wanted to protect her sisters from the scrutiny of others." This apprehension was a conspicuous thing expressed in the interviews.

116 Do we have here yet another anti-Mormon attempt to bolster credibility by claiming a phony degree? This strangely recurring phenomenon has been discussed by Daniel C. Peterson in FARMS Review of Books 8/2 (1996): 89–98. John C. Bennett was involved in selling diplomas before coming to Nauvoo. See Smith, Saintly Scoundrel, 13–25, 188.
117 Bullough and Bullough, "Lesbianism in the 1920s and 1930s," 896.
118 Ibid., 897.
Berryman conducted. Fears were made known about such things as hostile gossip, scandal, and social ostracism (pp. 220–21). As summarized by Quinn, several of those interviewed revealed that they “felt they were under the scrutiny of a homophobic society during this time period” (p. 220). Quinn recognizes that an important concern “that both lesbians and gays talked about among themselves in Salt Lake City of the early 1900s was the general fear of being ‘discovered’” (p. 219), and Berryman’s “work remained unpublished throughout her life, apparently due to her concern about possible identification of the lesbians and gay men she described” (p. 196). Why such concern? We are quite unable to grasp how Quinn’s primary notion, that Latter-day Saints in particular and Americans in general were more tolerant of homosexual conduct in the nineteenth century than now, can be squared with this fear of exposure found in Berryman’s study.

Quinn recognizes that the study “ignore[s] the obvious issues involved with sexual orientation and sexual behaviors in regard to one’s Mormon beliefs, church activity, and the expectations of LDS leaders” (p. 198). The issues that Quinn sees are the same issues that remain today. Berryman’s study is a compelling witness against Quinn’s basic thesis.

A “Coming Out” Party?

An important chapter in Quinn’s book is entitled “The Coming Out of Three Prominent Mormons in 1919” (p. 231). We will examine it in detail since Quinn discusses these persons at greater length than most, and it affords many representative examples of his technique.

Quinn uses the present homosexual expression “coming out” for self-disclosure or “coming out of the closet,” which is totally out of historical context in regard to the persons discussed. Quinn tries to forestall criticism by blurring the meaning of “coming out” through the use of his own definition—“to indicate making a public reference to one’s same-sex interests” (p. 231). This definition is so broad as to be meaningless, as are other expressions that he selects and repeats again and again to suggest hom性erotism, examples of which will follow.
Quinn claims to see a “coming out” in brief biographical sketches of Evan Stephens, a Latter-day Saint pioneer composer and conductor of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and of Mrs. Louie B. Felt and Mary “May” Anderson, longtime leaders in the Primary Association, which conducted the Latter-day Saint program for children. These innocent accounts were written to provide examples for the instruction of LDS youth and appeared in the *Children’s Friend* as lesson material in October 1919 (p. 232, 429–30). Quinn’s tendentious use of the Berryman study should alert readers to how preposterous it is to think that anyone would have a homosexual “coming out” at that place and time. He admits that “there was not even a hint of same-sex dynamics in the pre–1919 autobiographies and biographies of Stephens, Felt, and Anderson” (p. 246). Quinn, who admits to being “overwhelmed” by his own homosexual feelings, sees homosexual allusions in, of all places, the *Children’s Friend*. He seems unable to process the “warm language between friends” that was typical of the time, as he himself has noted (pp. 232, 247). Unfortunately, such warm language and Quinn’s disposition to uncover for his readers “hidden dimensions” result in much ungrounded speculation and essentially phony interpretations.

Stephens, Felt, and Anderson were honorable persons who are being vilified by Quinn. If his insinuations were given credence, we would have to conclude that these people lived lives of duplicity, claiming to adhere to strict moral standards in public, but violating them in private. They would have lacked basic integrity, being insincere and unfaithful to family, friends, and church leaders. They would certainly not be the exemplary persons they are considered to have been by all who knew them. Quinn holds that Stephens, Felt, and Anderson “took a risk” (p. 246) in their supposed “coming out.” By this, Quinn admits that the community

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119 See our concluding section below.
121 As discussed below, “coming out” is what Quinn did in 1996. Nothing remotely like a “coming out” is apparent in the sketches he cites. To use a children’s magazine to “come out” is a setting so improbable that it could only be compared hypothetically to Quinn’s staging his own “coming out” on Sesame Street.
of Saints did not in any way condone homosexual conduct. But this contradicts the basic thesis of his book. Why would these people have a “coming out” when at the same time Berryman’s subjects did all they could to avoid exposure? Stephens, Felt, and Anderson were in sensitive positions and would have been even more at risk than the obscure persons in Berryman’s study. Quinn does not attempt to reconcile this contradiction (p. 247).

Quinn alleges that “homoromantic and homoerotic subtexts” appear in these Latter-day Saint writings, and he also claims that he has “the eyes to see it or the antennae to sense it” (p. 232). Or the need to invent it. He borrows from the biographer of Amy Lowell, who claimed to discern subtexts in her writings. However, an immense difference exists between the writings of Amy Lowell, who in her time “was a well-known lesbian” (p. 172), and the writings of the Latter-day Saints who fall under Quinn’s scrutiny. The contemporaries of Stephens, Felt, and Anderson have not left the least hint of any conduct contrary to the moral standards of their faith and regarded the trio as exemplary Latter-day Saints. Does Quinn’s special “insight” give him license to cast suspicion on those in the past by picking words out of context and assigning a sexual meaning to them? His accounts turn out to be character assassination and distortions of the memory of the dead, who are not here to defend themselves—all as part of his attempt to further his own political agenda at their expense.

Misrepresenting the Primary Women Leaders

Louie B. Felt (1850–1928) and Mary “May” Anderson (1864–1946) were pioneer Mormon women who made a significant contribution to the foundation and development of the LDS Primary Association. The first two local Primary groups were organized in 1879, and Mrs. Felt was appointed to head the second group that same year. In 1880 she was appointed “as the first general president of the Primary Association,” serving for forty-

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five years until her retirement in 1925.\footnote{124} May Anderson, as she preferred to be called, was appointed secretary to the Primary General Board in 1890. She served as first counselor to Felt from 1905 until 1925 and then as general president until 1939.\footnote{125} Much could be said about their good works, the praise others have given them, and their evident love of children. They began the Primary Children’s Hospital and the Children’s Friend, which Anderson edited for thirty-eight years.

Quinn would have it that in the midst of their careers they had a “coming out,” and his readers are urged to believe that they lived in the same home together in what Latter-day Saints consider grave sexual sin. No evidence exists to lead us to believe that their relationship was anything but that of true and chaste Christian friendship and sisterly love. Their conduct seems to have been pure and modest in private and in public. What Quinn sees in their expressions of love for one another is what he brings to those statements. Here we see Quinn’s bias at work, as he strives to support his agenda. Throughout Same-Sex Dynamics, Quinn imagines homosexuality in the lives of single persons.

Louie and May lived in the same home, for much of the time, from about 1889 until Felt’s death in 1928. May first came to stay there when Louie was in the midst of a long illness and at the request of Louie Felt’s husband, who needed someone to care for her while he was away on a business trip. She remained after his return to help the older woman and perform domestic service in the home. For years several others lived in the home, both adults and children. Louie and May helped care for some of the Felt children and grandchildren, and together they started a kindergarten, in addition to their service in the Primary.\footnote{126} Quinn refers to them as “same-sex domestic partners” (p. 232).

Their sketches, what Quinn calls their “coming out,” were lesson materials for children. May Anderson was the editor of the Children’s Friend, and the two women merely provided information on their lives. It is all but certain that the lesson material was not autobiographical on the part of either of them, as Quinn

\footnote{124} Ibid., 265, 272. 
\footnote{125} Ibid., 266; Encyclopedia of Mormonism (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 4:1631, 1636. 
\footnote{126} Oman, “Nurturing LDS Primaries,” 266 n. 13, 268.
would have it, but instead sketches written by Marion Belnap Kerr, who had worked with them on the Primary General Board for over five years, and was responsible for writing those lessons. Quinn quotes briefly from the lesson material, which he depicts as following:

Those who watched their devotion to each other declare that there never were more ardent lovers than these two. And strange to say during this time of love feasting, Mary changed her name to May because it seemed to be more agreeable to both (pp. 243–44).

This language is not a “self-disclosure” by anyone, but the observation of others about them during the time they were developing their friendship before they lived in the same home. We have a strong expression of the friendship and Christian love that grew between them. Had it meant anything else, it surely would not have appeared in that time and circumstance, nor would it have been authored by a third person. Quinn tries to place a sexual meaning on “ardent lovers” and “love feasting,” but it would be anachronistic to do so. He should be well aware of that fact, having warned us at the outset of his book about “what historians call the ‘presentist bias,’” or trying to read present meanings into the past (p. 3). As Vella Neil Evans observed in her perceptive comments on Quinn’s book:

Mr. Quinn’s claims regarding “love feasting” and “ardent lovers” might be challenged by his own and quite frequent recognition throughout the book, of the “warm language between friends” that was common to persons born in the nineteenth century. Victorian prose is florid, as Quinn himself admits, and many terms held less sexualized connotations in 1919 than they hold today. Both the 1913 and 1944 dictionaries I consulted defined “love feast” as a meal taken in token of brotherly love and charity. The 1913 and 1929 dictionaries had no clearly sexualized usages for “lover.” Only the 1944 volume includes at the end of its listings

127 Children’s Friend (May 1927): 218; (January 1928): 34.
“a person with sexual passion for another” and “a paramour.”129

The simple use of the nickname “May” for Mary Anderson is for Quinn evidence that, in “establishing their new relationship, the younger woman publicly took a different name, as would a new bride, rather than adopting a private nickname between close friends” (p. 244). Quinn ignores the facts that Mrs. Felt suggested the nickname to avoid confusion with another friend and church worker130 and that “May” was then a common nickname for “Mary.”131 Quinn also mistakenly claims that the children’s lesson “added that the two women shared the same bed” (p. 244). In fact, the lesson “added” nothing of the sort. Quinn’s claim is true neither to the text nor the context of these sketches. The article spoke of the long hours the two women sometimes devoted to Primary work after their daytime employment, saying that “when they were too tired to sit up any longer they put on their bathrobes and crawled into bed to work until the wee small hours of the night” (p. 244).132 Quinn believes that “it is difficult to overlook the erotic dimension of that acknowledgment” (p. 244). Difficult for him, but not for those not inclined to hunt for any signs of a homosexual disclosure. The language Quinn quotes says nothing whatsoever about sleeping arrangements.133 Could it not have been that the ladies “crawled into” their own beds?

Quinn wants his readers to think that Louie Felt was estranged from her husband, Joseph H. Felt (p. 233). But the evidence points only to a normal heterosexual family life. Joseph and Louie met and fell in love during their journey to Utah. After their marriage they were sent to colonize at the “Muddy” in

129 Vella Neil Evans, Women’s Studies, University of Utah, at the Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, 16 August 1996. Audio Tape No. 238.
130 Carol Cornwall Madsen and Susan Staker Oman, Sisters and Little Saints: One Hundred Years of Primary (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 35.
133 Vella Neil Evans’s comment is apt here: “Most contemporary Mormon women—or non-Mormon women—would overlook the erotic in that scene.” Sunstone Symposium, 1996, Audio Tape No. 238.
Nevada under severe conditions, after which they returned to Salt Lake City. During their marriage, Joseph was twice called away on LDS missions.\textsuperscript{134} Louie Felt experienced the disappointment of not being able to bear children. Her husband took two plural wives, both of whom were able to have children, and Louie helped raise them. They were a harmonious family. During the government campaign against polygamy, Joseph Felt went on the “underground” for extensive periods, and Louie twice traveled East to avoid testifying against her husband. Through all this she was faithful to her husband.

Quinn claims the Felts lived apart after May Anderson began staying at the home, but again offers no evidence that would support his assertion (p. 233). It is true that Joseph Felt had two homes because of his plural marriages. Quinn’s attempt to use city directories here is futile, not only because they are incomplete, but because sensitivity about plural marriage at this time, right after the Manifesto, caused people to obscure their living arrangements. This explains the limited information about his family in Joseph Felt’s obituary.\textsuperscript{135} Quinn does nothing to inform his readers of the fact that Joseph Felt died in 1907, leaving Louie a widow for twenty-one years. With his usual insinuation and innuendo, he refers to Felt and Anderson as having a “live-in relationship” (p. 233), or of Anderson being Felt’s “live-in companion” (p. 243),\textsuperscript{136} reflecting post-1960s jargon referring to persons living together in an erotic relationship out of wedlock.

What was the contemporary understanding of the marriage of Joseph and Louie Felt? Joseph was described as “a tender, thoughtful, loving and devoted husband.”\textsuperscript{137} In the outline for the presentation of the lesson on Louie Felt, the stated purpose is to show that “the true way to serve the Master, is to serve one’s fellow men,” and she is held out as an example of that, including her faithfulness as “a model wife and ... mother to her hus-

\textsuperscript{134} Obituary of Joseph H. Felt, Deseret Evening News, 18 June 1907, 5.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{136} Compare Quinn, “Male-Male Intimacy,” 128.
\textsuperscript{137} Adelaide U. Hardy, “Living for a Purpose,” Children’s Friend (December 1918): 476. Hardy was Librarian for the Primary Association.
band's children." If Quinn's interpretation of the brief passage with the "warm language" were true, the writer of the lesson contradicted herself, and included ideas entirely incompatible with the lesson purpose and objective. Marion Belnap Kerr, the person who probably wrote the lesson and who served as historian for the Primary Association, was later to give a tribute at Mrs. Felt's funeral:

As a woman, Sister Felt was beautiful, cultured, modest, warmly sympathetic, magnetic, fun-loving, companionable, deeply spiritual and possessed an extraordinary love for little children.

As a wife, she was devoted to her husband and to his children. She was a good house-keeper, a real home-maker. Her devotion to her husband was the kind that helped him to stand by his ideals of right.

With the children's lesson, a photograph of Mrs. Felt and May Anderson appeared, bearing the caption: "The 'David and Jonathan' of the General Board" (p. 242). Quinn says that homosexual activist "Rocky O'Donovan regards that as a virtual announcement that Felt and Anderson were lesbians," thereby sidestepping the responsibility for saying it himself (p. 242). O'Donovan imagines that "for centuries David and Jonathan had signified male-male desire and eroticism." Signified to whom? Quinn has already affirmed that "most Bible readers and

138 Children's Friend (October 1919): 416. See the similar description in Andrew Jenson, Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson Memorial Association, 1901–36), 4:283. Compare the comments on this lesson by Adelaide U. Hardy: "The Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him,' so He created woman, and the apostle Paul says, 'Woman is the glory of man.'" She then sees Mrs. Felt as meeting that ideal: "How beautifully the life of our beloved President, Louie B. Felt, expresses that woman is the glory of man, and forcefully teaches 'The true way to serve the Master is to serve one's fellow men.'" Children's Friend (December 1919): 492.


140 Children's Friend (October 1919): 421.

scholars” would not place an erotic interpretation on the relationship of David and Jonathan (pp. 113, 114). Quinn dodges the question of what is meant in a 1919 Primary lesson in the *Children's Friend*. For Latter-day Saints, references to David and Jonathan seem to have had no homosexual connotations. Why? Latter-day Saints have always considered the relationship of David and Jonathan as a prime example of Christian love applying to brothers and sisters in the gospel—the true and chaste love so well described as we noted earlier from George Q. Cannon and Brigham Young. Elsewhere in his book, Quinn concedes that such chaste love exists and that it is very much more prevalent than are homosexual relationships (pp. 1, 69, 85, 89, 92, 93, 96, 109, 113, 114, 231, 247, 401). Quinn uses non-Mormon secular language, calling nonsexual affection “Platonic love,” or “same-sex intimacy without homoeroticism” (pp. 451, 468, 471).

What Quinn is really describing is heterosexual (same-gender) friendship devoid of any erotic behavior. His use of the words “same-sex intimacy” misrepresents the texture and tone of the friendship between Felt and Anderson. Whatever Quinn’s problem with language, it is clear that the lives of Louie Felt and May Anderson will continue to provide worthy examples of Christian love and service, not only for children in 1919, but for all Latter-day Saints.

**Evan Stephens as a “Case Study”**

Quinn claims that “the life of Evan Stephens, director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir at the turn of the twentieth century, provides a case study in the use of social history sources, as well as being a prime example of the early Mormon celebration of male-male intimacy.”

Quinn’s treatment of Stephens provides a case study of a tendentious historical method—of Quinn’s misuse of sources, his mistakes, and of insinuation and innuendo to evoke a “celebration” that occurred only in his imagination.

Evan Stephens has always been held in the highest esteem and affection by the Saints and in high regard by those outside the church who knew him and his work. The tenth child of a Welsh convert family, Stephens walked the plains in 1866 at the age of

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142 Quinn, “Male-Male Intimacy,” 110.
twelve. His family settled in the village of Willard, near Brigham City, Utah. Evan soon showed a great interest and aptitude for music and became a major musical force in northern Utah. In 1882, at age 28, Stephens moved to Salt Lake City to study and to teach music, and to supervise personnel of the Tabernacle Choir, and there he accepted a call to work with the education of the youth for the General Sunday School. This began what was essentially his lifelong mission, which was to build faith in God, Jesus Christ, and the restored gospel among LDS youth. It came at a time when the secularization of Utah’s schools was seen by Latter-day Saints as an attempt by the non-Mormon world to separate the youth from their faith. Stephens was called to help prevent that, and he was most effective in building faith and standing as an example for both youth and adults. 143

Evan Stephens attended the University of Deseret and later taught there, at the University of Utah, and at the Latter-day Saints’ University. He was active in teaching, composition, and in organizing and conducting concerts, children’s and youth cho­ruses, glee clubs, and operatic productions. Stephens also studied for a year at the New England Conservatory in Boston. The context of Stephens’s life is not just that of musician, composer, poet, and dramatist, but that of educator, both within and without the church. This key aspect of Stephens’s work, although neglected by Quinn, is important in helping us understand Stephens. In addition to his university teaching, Stephens also taught in the Salt Lake City schools and was the first public school supervisor of music in Utah. 144 Appointed director of the Salt Lake Tabernacle Choir in 1890, he served in that capacity for twenty-six years until his retirement in 1916. Under his direction the choir made several concert tours and received many honors. Stephens composed hundreds of hymns, songs, anthems, poems, and choral works; he was instrumental in laying a solid foundation for LDS music and hymns and for improving music at all levels of the church. Known

for his piety, Evan Stephens worked to establish respect for the restored gospel among non-Mormons in the years prior to and in the decades after statehood.145 His lyrics and poems stressed the celebration of Zion, loyalty to God, country, his church, friends, and the atonement of Jesus Christ. Many were the special concerts and testimonial programs conducted in his honor. Perhaps the most famous hymn composed by Stephens reads as follows:

Shall the youth of Zion falter
In defending truth and right?
While the enemy assaileth,
Shall we shrink or shun the fight? No!

While we know the pow'rs of darkness
Seek to thwart the work of God,
Shall the children of the promise
Cease to grasp the iron rod? No!

We will work out our salvation;
We will cleave unto the truth;
We will watch and pray and labor
With the fervent zeal of youth. Yes!

We will strive to be found worthy
Of the kingdom of our Lord,
With the faithful ones redeemed
Who have loved and kept his word. Yes!

Refrain:
True to the faith that our parents have cherished,
True to the truth for which martyrs have perished,
To God's command, Soul, heart, and hand,
Faithful and true we will ever stand.146

We have found many statements of praise, deep respect, and appreciation from church leaders, friends, and associates of Evan Stephens. Not one of them has left a hint that there was anything of “male-male intimacy” that involved an erotic dimension in his life, as Quinn insinuates. Instead, Stephens is known only as a strictly moral Christian gentleman. Quinn ignores all these sources. We have found no indication that Quinn made an effort to interview any of those who remembered Stephens and were acquainted with his personality and lifestyle; some of these individuals have retained letters, a photojournal belonging to Stephens, and photographs or other documents touching on the Welshman’s life. We assume that Quinn was either careless in his research or suspected such sources would not support his premise. When faulted in the press for ignoring such evidence, Quinn responded that sources on Stephens were “publicly unavailable.” However, the decision of whether a source will be made available should not have been made by Quinn, but by the persons who own the documents. It appears that Quinn did not attempt to gain access to important Stephens documents. Stephens’s family, relatives, and friends cited in Ray Bergman’s book on Evan Stephens, many of whom are on record at the LDS Family History Library as having submitted family information, were not contacted by Quinn. Historians are frequently involved in locating documents which at a given time appear to be “publicly unavailable.” The historian should not consider textual evidences


149 For a recent biography see Bergman, The Children Sang. We rely on this source for many details of Stephens’s life. So does Quinn, but he fails to give Bergman’s work near the credit it deserves in helping him locate sources and documents. Bergman’s book certainly made Quinn aware that he was ignoring many important sources.
“publicly unavailable” when he has not tried to access these documents.

Many notes in Quinn’s book show his use of the LDS Family History Library, but he did not use that resource to locate family members who might provide information. As in other essays by Quinn, his biases prevent a full inquiry, as he strives for a bizarre history. Quinn’s bias seems to have led him to avoid or ignore a large number of relevant historical documents and persons who could have provided information. We will use sources avoided by Quinn in order to indicate some of the flaws in his treatment of Evan Stephens. However, we are not dependent on these sources for our case against Quinn’s treatment of Stephens. The flaws are obvious in sources that he did use and which were “publicly available” to him.

Ray Bergman, a member of one of Stephens’s youth choirs, has written a biography of Stephens. Based on his research with Stephens family members and others who knew him, Bergman concluded that Stephens was heterosexual and that the speculations Quinn has made “besmirch the reputation of an honorable man.” After our own examination of the evidence, we agree with Bergman. Quinn’s errors and contradictions seem to originate from his determination to force Stephens to fit his own political and social agenda.

The Question of Marriage

Quinn claims that the “tightly knit Mormon community at church headquarters knew that Evan Stephens never married”


(p. 233). This is obviously true. Quinn reports the obvious in an attempt to suggest that it was not a matter of concern for the Brethren. Given Mormon teachings on marriage, single status certainly would be a matter of concern to those who knew Stephens. Undoubtedly, like many single persons in the Latter-day Saint community—even today—Stephens was asked about his unmarried status, but felt that such questions were in poor taste. Like many unmarried LDS adults, Stephens sometimes used humor to deflect such questions from family members and close friends, and on occasion he gave a stern rebuke to those who presumed to think him unconcerned about marriage.152 The Welshman endured some gentle and kindly teasing at times, as is apparent in the following remark by President Joseph F. Smith at the Latter-day Saint general conference in April 1908:

God bless our choir. May God bless Brother Evan Stephens, a man full of the love of truth, full of the spirit of song, devoted to the cause of Zion, a man who is wedded to his profession and his work, striving for the uplifting of the children of Zion. May the Lord bless him for it, and I hope by and by, when he gets old

152 Bergman, *Children Sang*, 188. George L. Mitton, in a letter to the editor, *Dialogue* 29/4 (1996): vi, has reported the recollection expressed to him by Samuel B. Mitton, who asked Stephens about his marriage plans several times, but “he always avoided the question with a witty response.” We note in passing that according to Quinn’s unsupported same-gender theory, we are expected to believe Mitton was one of Stephens’s “boy chums,” and should not have found it necessary to ask. Further, as reported by Jane Stephens James, a niece of Evan Stephens, “Everyone knew that Evan’s sweetheart had died, and that Evan and his housekeeper Sarah were looking to marriage, but that things were not working out because Sarah would not join the church. To bring the matter up would bring Evan pain, and no one wanted to do that. Evan was always kind and understanding to others. To do so would have been wrong. Evan indulged his close friends who asked about his marriage to Sarah with gentle humor, but there were rude ones who demonstrated few manners and little sensitivity to Evan’s feelings. He wanted to be married and have children in the worst way.” Jane Stephens James, interviewed by Rhett S. James, St. John, Idaho, 22 July 1955.
enough he will grow large enough to get wedded to a
good wife as well as to music.153

President Smith’s counsel to Evan Stephens certainly cannot be
interpreted as a lack of concern that Stephens was unwed and most
certainly does not reflect any recognition of homosexual proclivi­
ties in Stephens. And Quinn has himself shown President Smith’s
lack of toleration for homosexual behavior (p. 276).

Quinn’s speculation that Stephens lacked interest in marriage
has no documentary, oral, or traditional support. In Bergman’s
biography of Stephens the question of marriage is discussed at
length,154 but Quinn does not convey that to his readers. He
merely mentions one of Bergman’s points in an endnote, dis­
missing it without adequate cause (p. 250 n. 9). Readers are likely
to assume that Quinn’s is the only explanation for Stephens’s sin­
gle life, but this is far from the truth.

Bergman reviews evidence that Stephens “enjoyed the enthu­
siastic companionship of both boys and girls”155 and that he
used to date young women in his youth, and dated women later in
life.156 Quinn avoids mention of most of Stephens’s young
friends, merely citing Bergman’s generalizations.

Of great importance is the deep disappointment and “early­life tragedy that Stephens avoided discussing and never clarified,”
and which has emerged in several sources, no one of which
“completely reveals his reasons for never marrying.”157
Bergman recounts two instances where a young woman in whom
Stephens had much interest married another man. Even more
traumatic were the untimely deaths of two other women, in each

has been preserved in Stephens family tradition, reporting that the congregation
chuckled at Pres. Smith’s comments, and Stephens “stood and waved... a broad
smile on his face” saying “I’m trying to repent,” alluding to his courtship of
Sarah Daniels, which delighted everyone. The tradition is discussed by Rhett S.
James, “Making of a Folk Hero...” in Logan (Utah) Cache Citizen, 17 July
1997), 10.

154 Bergman, Children Sang, 179–89.

155 Ibid., 183.

156 Ibid., 182–84; see James in Logan (Utah) Cache Citizen, 17 July

157 Bergman, Children Sang, 183, emphasis added.
case leaving him in deep grief. The cumulative effect on Stephens must be given at least some weight.

Information about the first young woman comes from a recollection of Stephens's courtship and engagement recorded by Ruth Johnson, who taught English at Bear River High School for forty-two years. During that time she collected accounts of early pioneer experiences and they were privately printed in 1973. The account comes from her notes of an interview she conducted with an elderly pioneer woman named Helen Leonard at the time of Stephens's death in 1930. Leonard remembered the circumstances of Evan Stephens meeting his intended wife, their joyful courtship, engagement and intense love, and of the death of the fiancée after a brief illness. She described Stephens coming into their home and "amid broken sobs" telling them of her death, and of her deathbed request to him which was, in substance, "If I am not here any more, give all your time to music. Love me through your music." This recollection is in agreement with the Stephens family oral tradition and continues to be repeated by family and friends who actually knew Evan Stephens.

Quinn ignores another source. An incident occurred at Willard, Utah, and is mentioned by George D. Pyper (1860–1943), prominent Latter-day Saint leader and musician, who was for forty

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158 Ruth Johnson, Patchwork: Early Pioneer, Indian, and Faith Promoting Latter-day Saint Stories ([Logan, Utah]: Marion J. Gilmore and Helen J. Barton, 1973). Quinn alludes to this account only in an endnote, but dismisses it because Stephens would "have been only fourteen" when engaged (p. 250 n. 9). But the recollected dates are approximate, and Bergman estimates they were planning to be married in 1871 or 1872 when Stephens was older, and could provide for his wife. Bergman, Children Sang, 186. Research of Stephens family traditions by Rhett S. James and Betty Hammond, after Bergman's book was published, recounts that this incident of Stephens's engagement and the death of the young woman happened while Stephens was living with Alexander Lewis and his family at Logan, Utah, which would put Stephens in his twenties. Interviews by Rhett S. James with Jane Stephens James, Malad, Idaho, 22 July 1955; Lydia Stephens Merrill, Ogden, Utah, 24 July 1958; Melba Thomas Jones, Malad, Idaho, 3 May 1996 and 30 December 1996; Maude Thomas, Malad, Idaho, 2 June 1996.

159 Johnson, Patchwork, 45. Compare Bergman, Children Sang, 185–86.

160 See Stephens family interviews as cited above.
years a close friend of Evan Stephens. Pyper wrote and published this account seven years before Stephens's death:

The charm of his early days at Willard has never been dispelled and there are very few peaks or nooks in those hills that cannot show his footprints. Twas here he first developed his musical genius and twas here his first compositions were written. But with the charm of that life was also associated the memory of one of his deepest sorrows, experienced in the death of a dear young friend caused by an accident which occurred while the young people of the town were rehearsing a play.

Further details are offered by Bergman, based on the report of a descendent of a pioneer Willard family. It explains that Evan Stephens was infatuated with a young lady member of the dramatic company. In the course of a melodrama in rehearsal, the villain of the play was supposed to shoot the heroine, played by the close friend of Stephens. The cast member playing the villain pulled the trigger on the gun being used as a prop in the action, and a live shell still in the chamber by mistake was discharged, killing the girl.

These events may have taken their toll on Stephens and affected his feelings about marriage. Consider the following, also from George D. Pyper:

Professor Stephens never married, but I'm not so sure that his heart was always free. His home ... was a

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161 George D. Pyper was general superintendent of the Sunday Schools, and a member of the Church Music Committee on which Stephens also served. On his close association with Stephens, see his Stories of Latter-day Saint Hymns: Their Authors and Composers (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1939), 61.


163 Bergman, Children Sang, 184–85.
rendezvous for lovers [young men and women court-
ing]. There he provided nooks and crannies for their wooing.\textsuperscript{164}

He also was a natural poet. At the time of his death I [Pyper] came into possession of a brief diary that was published in "The Instructor" [in] December, 1930, [and] January, February and March 1931. Among his papers the following lines were found \textit{indicating something of a lost love}.

Seek to forget, O heart of mine,
Things that I dearly cherished,
Lest I offend God's present love,
Brooding on what has perished.

Seek to forget the Zion lost,
With many a cherished treasure,
Lest I the Zion God will give,
Fail to embrace with pleasure.

Look thou before, O soul of mine,
Cast not behind thy glances\textsuperscript{165}
That yet to be and not the past
Ever the soul entrances.

Mourn not the seed cast in the earth,\textsuperscript{166}
Look to the time of reaping;
Glorious the harvest thou may'st reap
Sown in the days of weeping.\textsuperscript{167}

\textsuperscript{164} Stephens's photojournal records his and Sarah Daniels's chaperoning the young men and women visiting his home. Photographic copy in possession of Rhett S. James, Logan, Utah.

\textsuperscript{165} Compare Luke 9:62.

\textsuperscript{166} A death and resurrection motif. See John 10:17-18; 12:24-25; 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-44.

\textsuperscript{167} George D. Pyper, "Hymn of the Month by Stephens: George Pyper Reviews Work of Evan Stephens," \textit{Deseret News}, 23 August 1941, sec. 2, p. 8, emphasis added. Pyper elsewhere claims that these lines evidence that "the dear Professor had some disappointment in his life which he sought to forget." George D. Pyper, \textit{Instructor} (April 1931): 199.
Pyper’s judgment that these verses reflect Stephens’s feelings of “a lost love” must be taken into account precisely because of his close association with Stephens. This sense of loss was often accompanied by a feeling of loneliness, despite his many friends, and when Stephens was away from home he often felt homesick and would return sooner than he had intended. Stephens may have been wrestling with what in his native Wales would be called *hiraeth*:

Having no precise English translation, ... it refers to the pain felt by someone when separated from a beloved person, place, or time ... [or] things one has had in the past and has since lost ... it is considered a good thing to feel, mainly because it indicates a strong emotional attachment ... felt to be appropriate and desirable.

According to a Stephens family oral tradition the above poem recounts Stephens’s feelings for his dead betrothed, his later failure to convert and marry Sarah Daniels, his grieving over not having children of his own, his hope of a future marriage after death, and his belief that God knew his heart and would provide him wife and children in eternity.

A very strong tradition in the Stephens family explains that Evan was deeply concerned about his unmarried status, but never found what he considered an appropriate opportunity for marriage with someone for whom he felt the same intense love he had

168 “Prof. Stephens has improved every hour in a musical way since coming here and will soon be ready to leave for home. The call of the mountains is strong upon him, and his many friends here will regretfully say good bye.” “Salt Lakers in Gotham,” Deseret Evening News, 25 November 1916, sec. 2, p. 3. Note the comment of friend J. Golden Kimball: “I know as well as I know anything that the Lord will bless Brother Evan Stephens; and as a servant of the Lord, I promise him he shall have the Holy Spirit to comfort and console him, and he shall not be lonely or desolate among this people.” Conference Report (April 1918): 134.


170 Rhett S. James, interview with David James and Jane Stephens James, St. John, Idaho, 22 July 1955.
known in his youth.\textsuperscript{171} Without that feeling he was reluctant to marry. Throughout Stephens’s life he apparently felt “under promise”\textsuperscript{172} to his lost love, although given the Latter-day Saint belief in the possibility of plural marriage in the afterlife, this did not necessarily preclude marriage to another person in mortality. Judge Thomas Stephens, Evan’s brother, recalled him saying that “More than breath, I desire marriage” and “My heart is sad for my beloved.”\textsuperscript{173} To Thomas he also explained: “I want sons and daughters, but for the time being I have music; and my students are become my sons and daughters.”\textsuperscript{174} This would appear to be his substitution for a normal family relationship, and his attempt to experience something similar, with the opportunity to help and serve the young men and women he befriended much like he would have wanted to do with children of his own. Indeed, Stephens was known to refer to the youth in his home as “the ‘children’ here.”\textsuperscript{175}

Quinn’s discussion of Stephens also suffers from a failure to consider the Welsh background and culture that influenced him, as well as his manner of expression. Grieving to death and celibacy are not uncommon among the traditional Welsh, who culturally learn an intense loyalty and connection to loved ones.\textsuperscript{176}

\textbf{Evan Stephens and Sarah Daniels (Quinn’s Nemesis)}

Quinn’s nemesis in his treatment of Evan Stephens is an attractive Welsh lady, Sarah Daniels, who served as the housekeeper in Evan Stephens’s home for twenty-eight years until he died in 1930.\textsuperscript{177} In accordance with the provisions of Stephens’s will, Sarah continued to live there after his death. We believe that in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[171] James, \textit{Utah Statehood} 1896, 59–60.
\item[173] Rhett S. James, interview with Jane Stephens James, St. John, Idaho, 22 July 1955.
\item[174] Ibid.
\item[175] Evan Stephens to Samuel B. Mitton, 19 December 1920. Photocopy in our possession.
\item[177] On Sarah Daniels, see Bergman, \textit{Children Sang}, 179–82, 188–89.
\end{footnotes}
trying to understand Stephens, it is imperative to seek an understanding of Sarah Daniels. Quinn has failed to do that, giving Sarah only the briefest mention (pp. 237, 238, 254 n. 47, 255 n. 51). He makes no attempt to consider either her significance in Stephens’s life or that of any of the women important to him.

Relatives who knew Evan Stephens—some of whom were interviewed in 1996—remember that he was determined to marry a Welsh-speaking girl and traveled to his birthplace—Pencader, Wales—to find a wife. It is believed he there met Congregationalist Sarah Daniels during his 1900 trip to Wales and Europe. Sarah conducted a children’s choir and played the organ. With appropriate chaperons, Evan and Sarah dated. Willard Christopherson, a young man on his way to an LDS mission, accompanied Stephens as a chaperon, as did the local minister in Wales. In 1953 Rachel Davies of Pencader, a relative who knew both Evan and Sarah, wrote to her “Cousin Mabel” Jones in St. John, Idaho, remembering how “Evan Stephens came over to this country to fetch” Sarah.

After Stephens returned to Utah, he corresponded in Welsh with Sarah Daniels for about two years. He then made arrangements for her to come to Utah in 1902, and she stayed in Evan Stephens’s home, chaperoned by male and female relatives and neighbors. On her arrival in Utah, Sarah did not join the church as Evan expected. Family tradition recounts that Evan felt he could not marry Sarah until she accepted the gospel. Intensely loyal to Sarah, Evan did not send her back to Wales. To do so would have shamed her in her village and closed the door to future positive relationships between Evan and his hometown, where he was held in high esteem. Willing to be patient with each other, Evan and Sarah agreed that Sarah would be his housekeeper. Evan employed her and paid her a wage that she might have independence of action. He then arranged for students (most often male and

178 Quinn, “Male-Male Intimacy,” 118.
female relatives) to board in his home to create a chaperoned atmosphere. In the years that followed, Evan and Sarah dated, held lively theological discussions, had opportunities to marry others, but remained loyal and true to each other.

Evan Stephens’s home was sufficiently large to accommodate several persons. Indeed it probably reflected his desire for and anticipation of a family. Obviously, the new living arrangement for the home was a continuation of the strict Welsh custom of chaperonage that would have been seen as necessary, not only by Sarah, but also by Evan—one that would also be appropriate in the moral environment of the Latter-day Saints. The community, having a knowledge of Stephens’s character and personality, must have found his arrangement an acceptable assurance of propriety, for many people visited or stayed in the home, and we have found no intimation of any contrary opinion. Nor has Quinn any such evidence. Interviews with Maud Thomas and Melba Jones, who stayed in Evan Stephens’s home as girls, confirm the family traditions, and that Stephens was very strict in his living arrangements. When boys and girls were in the home, Sarah and the young ladies stayed upstairs. Evan had his own room off by himself. The boys stayed in the other end of the house, separated from Evan and the women.¹⁸¹

Of particular interest is a Stephens family photograph that well illustrates the provision for chaperonage in the lives of Evan Stephens and Sarah Daniels. Probably taken in 1907, it shows Evan Stephens, seated, with Sarah Daniels standing behind and to the side, and Noel S. Pratt standing behind Stephens. Pratt was a young man who had boarded in Stephens’s home as a student. The photograph was a Christmas gift to Henry and Catherine Jones of Malad, Idaho. The provision for chaperonage provided a proper presentation for Sarah and Evan, who were not married. Sarah Daniels is standing next to Pratt, not seated by Stephens. During a visit to Wales in 1907, Sarah took a photograph of “Stephens & Friend Noel S. Pratt at the old [Stephens’s] home

¹⁸¹ Betty Hammond of Logan, Utah, interviews with Maud Thomas and Mabel Jones, Malad, Idaho, 20 April 1996 and 4 June 1996; and with Melba Thomas Jones, Malad, Idaho 3 May 1996.
spot South Wales, 1907,"182 and Pratt took a photograph of Evan and Sarah. The Christmas photograph shows the three at approximately the same age as in the photographs taken in Wales. It may be that the gift photograph was taken in Wales also, or in connection with that trip when Pratt accompanied Evan and Sarah as chaperon. The 1907 trip was to Stephens's birthplace, which was also the birthplace of Henry Jones and Sarah Daniels. The Pratt family were close friends of Stephens and were known to his relatives in Idaho.

Sarah Daniels stands in the photograph as an unmistakable bulwark against Quinn's gossip and speculation. Faced with this fact, Quinn apparently decided to leave Sarah Daniels "out of the picture" as much as possible. Not only did he scarcely mention her in his book, but, without permission of the owner, he had the Stephens family photograph copied from Bergman's biography,183 and then had it cropped to exclude Sarah Daniels, thereby distorting the context and meaning of the photograph. Quinn then had the Utah State Historical Society forward the "doctored" photograph to the University of Illinois Press without informing the Press it had been cropped.184 Press Director Richard Wentworth claimed that the University of Illinois Press personnel did not know the Stephens photograph had been altered, although the Bergman book was available to them.185 The resulting photograph showed only the two men together and was then prepared to be used as an illustration in Quinn's book and on the dust jacket—as a bit of "visual innuendo."

Don Noble, copyright owner of the photograph and a member of the Stephens family, asked that his photograph not be used. As the family saw it, the Stephens family heirloom was to be pub-

182 Stephens photojournal. Several other photographs illustrate this principle, often including one or two couples—sometimes three—along with Evan and Sarah.
183 Bergman, Children Sang, 180. The photograph appeared here in its unaltered form and with the permission of Don Noble, owner of the copyright. It is not to be reproduced, in whole or in part, without express permission.
185 Richard L. Wentworth to Rhett S. James, 4 and 11 June, 16 July 1996.
lished by the University of Illinois Press to help Quinn vilify a beloved relative and friend, and its intended use was especially offensive in the altered form. Initially Richard Wentworth refused to comply, but on review of the matter the University of Illinois ultimately decided against the use of the altered photograph and informed Mr. Noble that it had “decided to remove the photograph before publication. The Press agrees that the cropping of the image of Sarah Daniels from the photograph might call into question the photograph’s historical accuracy in the context of the book.”

This required the University of Illinois Press to reprint the dust jacket and “razor out” the deceptive page from five thousand copies of the book before it was offered to the public. The photograph was then withdrawn.

The devout Congregationalist Sarah had decided not to become a Latter-day Saint, and the devout Latter-day Saint Stephens refused to marry out of his faith. This resulted in a “good-natured antagonism,” according to Bergman, and they “would spend hours debating about religion, sometimes by the kitchen window within earshot of the neighbors or of the frequent house guests at Pine Lodge [Stephens’s home]—Evan’s ‘Boys’ or his sister or aunt who sometimes stayed there.”

Family tradition recounts that Evan often told his family in effect that “she would make a dear wife, but I will marry only in the faith.” But after Evan Stephens died, Sarah converted and joined the Church of

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186 Letter of Marcia A. Rotunda, Associate University Counsel, University of Illinois, to Jay W. Mitton, attorney for Don Noble, 12 July 1996. Copy in our possession.

187 The cropped photograph has been used in some advertising of the University of Illinois Press. See Lingua Franca 6 (July–August 1996): 22; Mormon History Association Annual Meeting [program], 1996, 25; University of Illinois Press, Illinois 1997 Spring/Summer Books & Journals [catalog], 34. A photograph of the original dust jacket with the “doctored” photograph was reproduced, again apparently without permission, in “Quinn and Controversial Book Come ‘Out,’” Sunstone 19/4 (December 1996): 73.

188 Bergman, Children Sang, 182.

189 Rhett S. James, interviews with David James and Jane Stephens James, St. John, Idaho, 22 July 1955; Lydia Stephens Merrill, Ogden, Utah, 24 July 1958; Melba Thomas Jones, Malad, Idaho, 3 May 1996; Maud Thomas, Malad, Idaho, 4 June 1996.
Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and became an active and dedicated member.

Sarah was very lonely without Evan. Her feelings were like those of a widow. In a letter to Mr. and Mrs. Samuel B. Mitton, who were friends of both of them for many years, she wrote: "I miss Stephens so much. I called on him Sunday [i.e., visited his grave], took a little pink posey up. Dr. Christopherson drove up, he waded through a foot and a half of snow to put the posey . . . on the grave." She mentioned she had "had three nice books from Pres. [Heber J.] Grant, and several fine letters" from him to comfort her, adding that "I am lonesome[;] thirty years is a long time to live in the same house with anyone. The one goes [and] the other one is like the last verse of 'The last rose of Summer.'" Sarah's allusion to this very familiar song is significant, being an effective way to express how she felt. The verse reads: "So soon may I follow, / When friendships decay; / And from Love's shining circle / The gems drop away. / When true hearts lie wither'd, / And fond ones are flown, / Oh! who would inhabit / This bleak world alone?"

In another remarkable letter to the Mittons, Sarah Daniels wrote the following a little more than a year after Stephens's death:

Now you will be more surprised than ever. I was "Sealed" to Stephens for "Time and all Eternity["] in the Salt Lake Temple . . . Nov. 5th 1931. To explain this:- Months ago a lady widow came to see me to have my permission that she would be "Sealed" to Stephens. I could not do anything. So I went to some one who could "do" or "not do." I saw President [Charles W.] Nibley among others, he said, you...
are the one to have that privilege [sic]. I before then put it up to the Temple authorities. It could not and would not be done without her prove that he had given his permission. ... Now if Care and all I have done and seen to since I have been here, after death also, has any reward, I have earned it. And I am not ashamed of what I have done. Stephens and I lived clean lives in this home; we have living Witness above. After all this, I of course did not know if this privilege would be granted me either, So I found out I could have permission from the Temple, but I would not take that, I had to have it from Pres. [Heber J.] Grant as head of the Church also as Stephens' personal friend. So last Wednesday about 3 p. m. he said the word. ... I was sure that I had it from the right source.

Bishop Christensen just came to the gate, he said, you are going to be "Sealed" to Stephens today. ... I just had a letter from Pres. Grant authorizing it to be done. The man who Baptized me¹⁹⁴ stood for Stephens. ... Mr. Card [was] one witness [I] did not know the other man. Bishop Christensen read the service. The two men kissed me, and hugged me, and we all cried. ...

This witness Mr. Card shook my hand as I came out. Said [a] lot of nice things. I said, Suppose Stephens will put on his hat and leave me, He said, I sure would be glad to have you. ... I remained Single to be here with him, had a good chance to marry a wealthy man, but the Church stood between us and Stephens too. Now, I also refused a good home to be with Stephens, So I feel that I deserve it. ... My health is fair but [I am] lonely.¹⁹⁵

Much is to be learned from these letters. Sarah loved Evan Stephens and perceived that he loved her and was sufficiently interested in marriage to be willing to marry her, were she to be

¹⁹⁴ That is, at the time she joined the church.
¹⁹⁵ Sarah Daniels to Mr. and Mrs. Samuel B. Mitton, circa 11 November 1931, spelling and punctuation as in original. Photocopy in our possession.
converted. She expressed genuine faith in the gospel she had embraced, and in the afterlife and a continued association with others. She respected and supported the Brethren. Her statement that “Stephens and I lived clean lives in this home; we have living Witness above,” becomes her solemn oath because she calls on God to be the witness of their chastity. This is her affirmation about the moral quality of the home, not only as it related to Evan and herself, but in their relationships to others who lived there. Sarah’s expression also underlines the concern felt by some members of the Stephens family and others that a bachelor and spinster were living in the same house. 196 The First Presidency, knowing Evan and Sarah well, saw each of them as morally chaste and worthy to be married for eternity. The assurance of such worthiness would have been necessary for them to be placed under sacred temple vows; Sarah would have been carefully interviewed about such worthiness before being authorized to go to the temple. In writing to long-standing friends she expected that they would have the same opinion of their worthiness and of the marriage being appropriate, as indeed they did. 197

Having lived in the Stephens home as his housekeeper for twenty-eight years, Sarah Daniels would have known Evan Stephens better than any other person. If there were anything irregular in his life and home, she would have been the first to sense it, and because of her love, been deeply offended. Sarah knew Evan as morally clean and worthy in every way and felt he would be willing to accept her as a marriage partner once she understood and shared his religious beliefs. Sarah Daniels is a powerful witness against Quinn’s thesis.

Stephens, Quinn, and the Rubáiyát

A centerpiece in Quinn’s portrayal of Evan Stephens is his use of a verse that he mistakenly claims is his “same-sex love song”

196 James’s interviews cited above.
197 A daughter of the Mittons remembers that her parents “agreed that the sealing was the right thing to do and they were very happy about the sealing. They always wondered why Evan Stephens and Sarah Daniels did not get married and thought they would have been good marriage partners.” Mary Mitton Kennedy, interviewed by George L. Mitton, Salt Lake City, 17 June 1997.
The verse appeared in an account of a program honoring Evan Stephens and his music at the Latter-day Saints' University in 1902. Before discussing the verse, we need to understand the setting in which it appeared. In two passages filled with false assertions, Quinn says that

Stephens announced a same-sex love song to an assembly... in which Stephens invited his unnamed "friend" to "conspire" and rebel against "the established order," which made it difficult to "love if we dared to do so" (p. 72).

Stephens indicated that there was a socially forbidden dimension in his same-sex friendships. In his introduction to an original composition, Stephens invoked the examples of Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan, Damon and Pythias, and then referred to "one whom we could love if we dare to do so." Indicating that the problem involved society's rules, Stephens explained that "we feel as if there is something radically wrong in the present make up and constitution of things and we are almost ready to rebel at the established order" (p. 241).

If we sense anything radically wrong, it is Quinn's own false reporting of the documents and their interpretation. He misinforms his readers when he claims Stephens made remarks introducing his music to the assembly (p. 241). None of the comments are from Stephens. The introductions throughout the program were prepared and given by Dr. Joshua H. Paul, president of the university. Paul's remarks are presented out of context and given a wrong meaning by Quinn. Nothing indicates that Paul's comments were about "same-sex" relationships—quite the contrary. Indeed, we can find no homosexual references anywhere in the entire program. The student publication described the program as follows:

"Stephens Day" was the most remarkable and beautiful program of song ever rendered in our school

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198 Quinn erroneously dates this event to 1903 (p. 242).
and perhaps in the State. The songs of love and home by our poet-singer, Evan Stephens, rendered under his own direction by a number of the leading artists of the city, with a descriptive introduction of each piece by President Paul, constituted altogether a unique and delightful entertainment of the highest order and of the most impressive significance.¹⁹⁹

In the next issue of the student publication, further details were given, including many “explanatory remarks made during the entire program by President Paul.”²⁰⁰ Paul’s comments make clear the strong moral message expressed in Stephens’s songs, including love of home, the importance of love and fidelity between husbands and wives, and the heritage of the pioneers.²⁰¹ Paul then introduced two “songs of friendship,” which were further described by Paul (in the Deseret News account of his remarks), as songs containing “the most fitting expression of the emotions of unrequited love and of the resignation which in noble minds follows such a disappointment.”²⁰² President Paul then went on to discuss such friendship, ending with a quotation from a well-known poet (not Stephens), as he did in each other section of the program.²⁰³ The verse which concludes Paul’s commentary is the one Quinn wrongly says is Stephens’s “same-sex love song.” The following is Paul’s introduction:

Ever since the days of Ruth and Naomi, of David and Jonathan, of Damon and Pythias, the delineation in song and story of human friendship, must be regarded as one of the choicest phases of composition. One in whom we can confide when we need advice, and to whom we can go in times of perplexity, is knit to us by closer ties than those merely of the wise counselor and

¹⁹⁹ Gold and Blue 3/5 (1 January 1903): 4, emphasis added.
²⁰¹ Ibid., 3–5.
²⁰² “Fine Program in Barratt Hall,” Deseret Evening News, 19 December 1902, 2, emphasis added. Quinn did not consult this important source.
²⁰³ For President Paul’s tendency to quote poetry frequently in his talks, often unattributed, see the example of his address in Children’s Friend (August 1912): 424–28.
judge. The friendship depicted in the two songs "Parting Friends," and "By the Brooklet," is of that warmer and more intimate relation, the severance of which is felt to be a bereavement. When we part with one whom we could love if we dared to do so, that is, if it were proper and rational to love this dear friend, we feel as if there is something radically wrong in the present make up and constitution of things, and we are almost ready to rebel at the established order. We are in the mood to say:

Ah, friend, could you and I conspire
To wreck this sorry scheme of things entire,
We'd break into bits, and then—
Remold it nearer the heart's desire.204

This poetry was not written by Stephens (nor did he claim it to be his), nor was it sung at the concert, as Quinn claims, but is a quatrain from the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam.205 It was known distinctly then, as it is today, as a heterosexual expression in the Islamic tradition.206 It would have been recognized by most persons in the audience, as the Rubáiyát was enormously popular at the time and a subject for study in literature classes.207 The

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204 "Stephens' Day at School," 5.
205 We express appreciation to Prof. Gordon K. Thomas for assistance and background information on the Rubáiyát. The passage appears to be from one of Edward FitzGerald's famous English translations. The slight variations in Paul's quotation may have come from quoting from memory or perhaps were influenced by another available translation. For additional discussion, see Rhett S. James, "Poem Authored by Omar Khayyam," Logan (Utah) Cache Citizen, 13 June 1996, 16.
206 President Paul could not have intended anything else. Only a few days before the program honoring Stephens, he gave a forceful sermon in the Salt Lake Tabernacle on the need to maintain sexual purity, including a reference to the sins of Sodom, which in Paul's time included what would today be termed homosexual conduct. Paul's expression yet again undermines Quinn's thesis of early Latter-day Saint tolerance toward such behavior. "Services at the Tabernacle," Deseret Evening News, 1 December 1902, 8.
207 For a contemporary note on its popularity see "A New Translation of Omar Khayyam," Deseret Evening News, 6 January 1900. The article indicated that the market was being flooded with new translations, and mentioned its
message Paul derives from this verse in the context of the poem from which it comes is that when we confront those inexorable conditions and distresses in life—death, the passage of time, the parting with beloved persons—our emotions are such that we are tempted to rebel and would change these conditions if we could. But we would also seek the mitigation and comfort of heaven and the angels, as the context of the Rubáiyát suggests. President Paul’s overall message (and of the songs of Stephens), is that the Latter-day Saint will muster faith and remain true, having confidence that God will yet bring consolation and fulfillment from that which was “Sown in the days of weeping.” Paul’s remarks were an appropriate introduction to the musical expression of “unrequited love,” deep “disappointment” and a trusting “resignation” to God’s will. They had nothing to do with “same-sex” behavior of any kind.

The two songs introduced by Paul were duets for a man and woman, each representing the love of parting heterosexual friends. They appear to reflect a grieving in Stephens. We have already touched on Welsh grieving patterns, where death and celibacy often resulted, and Stephens was very Welsh. Of the two songs, we think “By the Brooklet” is of particular significance to an understanding of Stephens. In publishing the words of it in a review of the concert, the Deseret News noted that it was being printed for the first time, and that it was “the earliest of [Stephens’s] compositions on friendship.” It is reprinted here from that source. We think it autobiographical, for it speaks of a young man and woman joyfully in love, the death of the woman, the grief of the man and the anticipated happy reunion in the afterlife. It reflects the Mormon belief in eternal marriage beyond the grave, which was Stephens’s hope. The text indicates which verses are to be sung by the man or the woman, and it is anything but a “same-sex love song.” When it was performed at the concert, the reporter said that it “quite captivated the audience with its beauty and tenderness.” In Stephens family oral
traditions, this song is about Evan Stephens when he was engaged to the "girl from Weber Valley" and about her death in the winter before their intended marriage.

By the Brooklet

(Both)
By the brooklet in the grove
Light of heart we used to rove,
And our songs among the trees
Were borne afar upon the breeze;
Hand in hand without a care,
Dreaming of a future fair,
While our shouts, so merry still,
Re-echoed from the distant hill;
The heavens seemed to grow more bright,
Those sunny days and moonlit nights,
And earth seemed fair as heaven to me,
While roaming there I'd be with thee.

The happy songs we used to sing
Had such a gay and careless ring,
They filled our hearts with such delight
That e'en the gloomiest day seemed bright.

(He)
Happiest moments swiftest fly,
Fairest flowers soonest die;
So one morn I learned to know
Time had changed our joy to woe.
And in vain I strove to sing
With that same old careless ring;
O'er my life had come a change,
Heaven and earth seemed cold and strange.

(Both)
By the brooklet in the grove
Light of heart no more we rove,
And the merry shouts are still
That echoed from the distant hill.
(She)
If the heart still beats as true,
All those pleasures we'll renew,
Every joy we may restore
That we prized so much of yore;
If the heart be not estranged
From the things we deem so changed,
Skies may brightened be above
By the magic power of love.

(Both)
By the brooklet in the grove,
Once again come let us rove;
And our songs among the trees
Be borne afar upon the breeze;
Hand in hand without a care,
Dreaming of a future fair,
Let our shouts so merry still
Re-echo from the distant hill,
Then come again, return to me,
All happy joys but wait for thee.211

Paul may have been aware of Stephens's early experiences with "unrequited love," for such an understanding appears to inform his remarks. He was a close friend of Stephens, who may have confided in him. Looking back to this time, Stephens wrote most respectfully of Paul's qualities and of the love he felt "whenever my mind reverts to the dear by-gone-days of Deseret University and later of the L. D. S. University," and to his "beloved friend, Joshua H. Paul."212 We can be confident that Quinn's statements about the meaning of Stephens's song are groundless. Stephens never said "that there was a socially forbidden dimension in his same-sex friendships" (p. 241), nor did any of his songs even remotely "indicate that Evan Stephens wanted to live in a culture" tolerating homosexual conduct, as Quinn imagines, "where he could freely share homoerotic experiences

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211 "Fine Program in Barratt Hall."
with the young men he openly loved in every other way” (p. 242). Stephens surely did not present a song or narrative that provided “encouragement for same-sex friends to ‘rebel at the established order,’ and ‘dare’ to love according to their ‘heart’s desire’” (p. 426). The textual record shows something altogether different, and it shows that Quinn’s assertions derive from his own imagination. By claiming the possibility of a “socially forbidden dimension,” Quinn again contradicts his basic thesis that homosexual conduct was tolerated by Latter-day Saints during the nineteenth-century.

**Stephens and His Students**

Stephens was in his midsixties when he wrote a series of articles for the *Children’s Friend*, intended for use in instructing children in Primary classes. In these lesson materials Stephens recalls his childhood in Wales and his youth in Utah and adapts his narrative and comments to be meaningful to the children. The series was entitled “Evan Bach: A True Story for Little Folk, by a Pioneer” (p. 250 n. 12). Quinn says this is “a play on the name of German composer J. S. Bach” and that “Stephens himself authored these third-person autobiographical articles that lacked a byline” (p. 233). Quinn misses the point. In Welsh “his mother called him Evan Bach from *backgen* meaning boy and *bach* meaning small,” an expression of endearment as in “my dear little boy,” and one in common use in Wales today. By mistaking the Welsh *bach* for J. S. Bach, Quinn demonstrates his failure to understand Stephens and his misunderstanding of things Welsh.

In these articles in the *Children’s Friend*, Stephens is recalling things through the eyes of his childhood, a different culture and place. As for the mysterious lack of a byline, it is an expression of

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213 Quinn repudiates this unfounded statement himself by his own disclaimer: “It can only be a matter of speculation” that Stephens was anything but heterosexual, again showing the Janus-faced character of his writing. Logan (Utah) Herald Journal, 25 April 1996, 21. See the discussion about the “real Evan Stephens” at the end of this Stephens section.

214 *Children’s Friend* (January through December 1919); Bergman, *Children Sang*, 279.

215 Bergman, *Children Sang*, 21, emphasis in original.
modesty on Stephens's part, for he is revealed as the author before the series is completed. In these essays, Stephens offers many choice experiences as examples to the children: love of home, parents and friends, faithfulness, integrity, appreciating hardships of the pioneers and the labor of others, developing talents, and enjoying the fruits of perseverance, to mention a few. But Quinn sees none of this. For Quinn, the Stephens essays are merely lines to read between in order to infer sexual allusions. Thus, in the recollection of his normal childhood admiration for the "manliness" of the young adult farmhands in Wales, we are expected to see in a young lad a homosexual interest in the male form (see p. 234). Stephens spoke of the "form to admire" in "the creature Man" (his italics). He also pointed out that in the young men could be seen "a truly superior race of beings." "Creature" is the important concept here. He is inviting the children to consider the wonder of the human creation to be seen around them and to begin to appreciate the marvel of humankind, created in the image of God.

We believe that thoughtful readers who consider these articles in full will not agree with Quinn's characterization of Evan Stephens. As Jeffery O. Johnson has said:

We need to see these articles in context, and in context to my eyes they look ... very much like a middle-aged man, talking about his experiences, and trying to translate those experiences for Primary [children] ... and not confessing or "coming out" in them.

Johnson further observed that he does not think the church authorities would have seen the Children's Friend articles as a confession by Stephens, Felt, and Anderson, and therefore does

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216 Teachers and others surely knew that Stephens was the author of the series. See the notice of the beginning of the series in Deseret Evening News, 4 January 1919, sec. 4, p. 3. The articles are "evidently going to tell incidents in the life of that popular instructor and leader of choirs and children's choruses, Evan Stephens."

217 Children's Friend (November 1919): 432.

“not believe they exhibited any tolerance in leaving them in their [church] positions.” 219

The same applies to Stephens and his youthful friends in Willard, Utah, who are mentioned in the Children’s Friend. Stephens was a young musical prodigy who was admired and encouraged in his talents by the men and women in the local choir and community, but nothing suggests an unchaste association. Quinn would paint the whole village “gay,” which is ridiculous. Stephens formed strong and lasting friendships, and friendship was important to him throughout his life and was a common cultural value of the time. No evidence has been found to show us that Stephens’s place in the choir and village was anything but that of a God-fearing Christian. Stephens said, “the two great passions of [my] life seemed now to be growing very rapidly, love of friendship and music” (p. 233). Of a dear friend at age sixteen he remembered (p. 234): “What a treasure a chum is to an affectionate boy!” He was teaching the importance and lasting value of friendship and was using a term for a close friend that he thought would be understood by the children of the day, and “boy chum” was then used in the editorial captions for photographs of two of his young friends in the “Children’s Friend” (pp. 235, 237). Quinn mistakenly thinks “chum” or “boy chum” sounds unusual enough today to suggest some ulterior meaning, since he continues to use it for effect in connection with Stephens’s adult male friends and the young men who boarded in his house; but such use stems from Quinn, not Stephens. A historian should know better than to suggest that a sexual meaning was intended by Stephens and the editors of the Latter-day Saint magazine for children (pp. 83, 235, 240, 241, 242, 245, 259 n. 76, 369, 431, 433).

We cannot find that Stephens continued to use the word chum as might be suggested by Quinn’s repetition, except as he recalls someone from his youth. Like men of his time, Stephens did sometimes use boy or boys in referring to young men. Along with Sarah Daniels, who served as housekeeper, a number of young men, and some young women, lived in Stephens’s home while they attended school or university. Several females were his own

219 Ibid.
Stephens helped many of them with their expenses and enabled some to study for advanced degrees outside Utah. Clearly, he regarded both male and female students with paternal-like care and even said to one, “I believe I love you ... as much as your father does” (p. 240). He was proud of what his nephews, nieces, children of close friends, and students achieved, and continued to follow their lives and careers with great interest. Among them were two medical doctors, a dentist, a lawyer and judge, a mission president and public official, musicians, and successful businessmen and businesswomen. They and their families retained great respect for Stephens. He was a financially generous, kindly, genial, and loyal figure who visited many of these families when travel permitted.

How then did Stephens use the term boys? To refer affectionately to those he nurtured, especially those who went forth and succeeded and in whom he took justifiable pride. Stephens regarded his students as “my sons and daughters.” In the same spirit, he spoke of the singers of the Tabernacle Choir. After their tour of the Eastern states in 1911, which was a triumph for Stephens and the choir, he praised their performance in New York, saying “how proud of my boys and girls I was.” On the same trip, we see his typical use of boy. He said that “at Baltimore I spent the day with my ‘boy,’ Dr. Willard Christopherson, and his good wife.” Stephens helped finance Christopherson through medical school at Johns Hopkins University. When using the term boy, Stephens would usually place it in quotation marks. He spoke of those performing in a testimonial for him in the Tabernacle in 1917: “Prof. Joseph Ballantyne and Prof. Squire Coop were each young members of my Ogden singing

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220 Bergman, “Author Disputes Quinn on Life of Evan Stephens.”
221 Bergman, Children Sang, 214.
222 This is clear from several references in the letters Stephens wrote to Samuel B. Mitton and the Mitton family, photocopies of which are in our possession.
223 “Leader and Organist of the Tabernacle Choir Review the Tour,” Deseret Evening News, 2 December 1911, 11, emphasis added.
224 Ibid.
class away back in 1883—hence in the full sense are both ‘my boys.’”\textsuperscript{226} Stephens’s usage was not strange. In reviewing newspapers of the period we frequently found boy used to indicate someone who had gone out from the community and succeeded. For example: “Salt Lake Boy’s Promotion” in reference to a mature man appointed secretary to a railroad president.\textsuperscript{227} Or “Another Utah Boy’s Success” referring to the receipt of a Ph.D. in Chicago;\textsuperscript{228} and numerous references to the “Utah boys” serving in World War I, such as “Utah Boy Wins High Honors at Annapolis.”\textsuperscript{229} This common and innocent use shows caring and regard, nothing like Quinn suggestively referring to the young men as Stephens’s “live-in ‘boy chums’” (p. 83 n. 33). It should also be noted that Stephens’s close friends were not teenage boys, but mature men and women. Quinn fails to translate the past into a present understanding.

What was the sexual orientation of Stephen’s “boys”? After all his insinuation and innuendo, Quinn produces no evidence from any source that Stephens and his male and female boarders had anything other than a heterosexual orientation. All the evidence is on the heterosexual side. Quinn may challenge our statement because of what he purports as evidence in a poem he cites, but his use of the poem is mistaken and misleading. The poem appeared among the articles Stephens prepared for the \textit{Children's Friend}, and was titled “Friends.” Quinn has miscalculated here. His imagination wanders far beyond the historical sources, and he appears to superimpose his homosexual preference on the objects of his research. Quinn’s approach to this poem provides another example of his misuse of sources, abusing the trust of his readers. The claims he makes about the poem are totally unsupported by the full text, the context in which it appeared, the purpose and intent of Stephens and the editors, and the cultural background the poetry represents.

For his own purpose, Quinn quoted only the first eight lines of the poem. His placement of a period at the end of that part makes

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{226} “Big Testimonial for Evan Stephens Has Been Arranged,” \textit{Deseret Evening News}, 10 March 1917, sec. 1, p. 16.
\item \textsuperscript{227} \textit{Deseret Evening News}, 5 December 1898, 6.
\item \textsuperscript{228} \textit{Deseret Evening News}, 12 September 1911, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{229} \textit{Deseret Evening News}, 11 July 1918, sec. 2, p. 1.
\end{itemize}
it appear complete, and he even refers to the eighth line as the "last line" of the poem (p. 241). Because the part Quinn suppressed is helpful in determining what Stephens and the editors of the children’s magazine really intended, we quote the entire poem as it appeared there.

Friends

We have lived and loved together,
   Slept together, dined and supped,
Felt the pain of little quarrels,
   Then the joy of waking up;
Held each other’s hands in sorrows,
   Shook them hearty in delight,
Held sweet converse through the day time,
   Kept it up through half the night,
O we’ve borne the sweetest title,
   Ever given by man to man
That of Friend, one to the other,
   Faithful, loyal through life’s span.
Drawn together by a magnet
   Kept together by its pow’rs,
Love of friendship—human blessing,
   Lighting life’s dark lonely hours.230

Quinn’s technique needs discussion. In quoting only the first part of the poem, he gives undue weight to “Slept together,” thus trying to support his claim that it was a “poem about male bedmates” (p. 241), rather than the poetic and general expression about human friendship which was intended and was stressed in the conclusion of the poem. It is a good and representative example of a poem on friendship, a genre very popular at the time, examples of which often appeared in Latter-day Saint magazines in Stephens’s day.231 It would have been so recognized then, with

231 Compare purpose and parallels in Benj. Hollingsworth, “Friendship,” Millennial Star 45 (30 April 1883): 288. See also “We Have Lived and Loved Together,” a popular contemporary poem of the noted Charles Jefferys, the first line of which is identical with the one we are discussing, in The Best Loved
none of the unchaste and sexual connotations Quinn imposes. His anachronistic interpretation of such expressions as “Slept together” is repetitive in the book, as we saw in his treatment of Joseph Smith. The probability of such terms having sexual connotations at the time is so remote that the context would have to demand that most improbable interpretation. The context here does not support the idea, either in the poem itself, or in the setting in which it was published. Following the caution of historian Anthony Rotundo, one needs to be alert throughout Quinn’s book to the “meanings attached to the experience of two males (or two females) sharing a bed. In our own time, the phrase ‘sleeping together’ has become a euphemism for sexual intimacy, but in the nineteenth century that phrase still carried its literal [nonsexual] meaning.” Thus, “from the earliest years of childhood, males shared beds—as had been the practice for centuries—and continued to do so throughout their lives, without homoerotic desire or the suspicion of homoerotic intent.” Quinn knows this, but appears determined to advance his erotic interpretation anyway.

In our reading of Quinn’s discussion and notes, we have not found that he presents any evidence that Stephens shared a bed with anyone in his life. It is all carefully constructed innuendo. One may speculate on the probability that as a child Stephens may have shared a bed in the one-room “little log hut” in Willard, Utah, but even on this subject Stephens himself writes of “a home made bed in one corner, and my bedding rolled up in another, on

Poems of the American People, ed. Hazel Felleman (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1936), 34.

232 See Quinn’s index under “Bedmates” and “Sleeping with.”


235 Quinn is familiar with the works of Rotundo and Yacovone cited here (pp. 121 n. 11, 361 n. 118).
the floor.” Quinn totally ignores this statement of Stephens. In spite of the fact that he has no evidence, Quinn implies that these lines of poetry concern Stephens and the students who boarded in his Salt Lake City home. We will see that the poem was used to illustrate something else entirely. The fact is that the students are not discussed by Stephens anywhere in the articles. In any case, we know that persons who lived in the Stephens home recount that he was very strict in his living arrangements. Sarah Daniels and the young ladies stayed upstairs. Evan had his own room off by himself. The boys stayed in the other end of the house, separated from Evan and the women.

Quinn refers to the students as Stephens’s “boyfriends,” a suggestive term not found in the poem or other sources. Quinn’s insinuation of unchastity, and the manner in which he expresses it, is in poor taste, coarse, and even salacious, suggesting what would have been criminal conduct for an adult then and now (pp. 72, 117–18, 241, 430–31). Nothing in the poem and its context implies anything of the kind. Since Quinn tries to reinforce his claims by repetition in various places, we will bring together several of his false statements to make apparent the impression he seeks to create. Readers should compare the poem with the following assertions that Quinn would have us think are based upon it. It is outright fabrication for Quinn to claim that this verse “indicated that all [Stephens’s] youthful boyfriends had shared his bed” (p. 430), or that he wrote it “to celebrate the many same-sex relationships he ‘dared’ to enter with male teenagers who shared his bed” (pp. 117–18). The “dared” is not from Stephens as Quinn makes it appear, but from Joshua Paul, in connection with Paul’s quotation from the Rubáiyát discussed above. It has nothing to do with Stephens or the students. As though repetition would establish truth, Quinn reiterates that the poem “showed that each of these young men shared his bed” (p. 241), or that the “boy chums shared his bed” (p. 431). He even inflates his assertions to write that “the middle-aged Stephens had a lifelong pattern of falling in love with teenage male singers who then


237 Interviews with Maud Thomas, Mabel Jones, and Melba Thomas Jones cited above.
became his bedmates” (p. 72), and that he “shared the same bed with a succession of beloved teenage boys and young men for years at a time.”238 These ideas are all from Quinn, not Stephens. They are very misleading, slanderous and without foundation, either in the poem or any other source. They are the kind of sensational statement that can influence book reviews and press comments and create an impression of Evan Stephens that is utterly false.

At the end of Stephens’s series of articles about his boyhood and youth, which ran each month during 1919, the editors indicated that he expected to write twelve more articles. Each would cover “one special interesting event in his life and labors specially written for the ‘Children’s Friend’ and the children.”239 One of these was to have been “an article showing glimpses of his home life and companions,” or those “who have shared his home life.”240 The editors must have viewed Stephens’s assistance and influence with these young men and women as an important aspect of his “life and labors,” and his efforts and their successes as something that would be an inspiration for the children. Unfortunately, Stephens’s busy travel schedule permitted him to write only nine of the articles and he never got to that subject at all. Nevertheless, Quinn incorrectly says that these 1920 articles “emphasized different aspects of Stephens’s adult life, including his same-sex relationships” (p. 233). In this way he misrepresents the context of the poem. What Quinn does not make known is that the poem actually appears as an introduction to Stephens’s article on his experiences with the Tabernacle Choir, and in particular the choir’s tour of the Eastern States in 1911.241 That is the true context of the poem, and Quinn cannot escape it. It is a topic far removed from Quinn’s speculation. He also failed to consider the reason for the poem’s appearance in a magazine for children and how it would serve as lesson material for them. His own interpretation would be unthinkable for that purpose.

239 Children’s Friend (December 1919): 473.
240 Ibid.
241 Children’s Friend (June 1920): 228.
Stephens continued in the next issue, explaining his aim in an article titled “Having a Firm Foundation.”242 While one can see in the poem a reflection of the friendly associations and traveling dynamics of the choir “in a long train made up of Pullman [sleeper] coaches,”243 it is important to recognize the broader implications of the poem for the choir, and its emphasis on the true Christian love and fellowship that Stephens deemed so important to the success of the choir’s ministry. This love and friendship applied to both men and women—the “man to man” of the poem would have been understood then as being generic, referring to mankind. Friendship was a “human blessing.” The brotherly and sisterly love of Christian friends is referred to in Stephens’s distinctive phrase love of friendship, which we have italicized in the poem above. The same phrase is also found in his discussion of his teenage experiences in Willard, Utah, and the “love of friendship,” which he says was developing at that age along with his love of music (p. 233, Stephens’s italics). This is a significant correspondence, and it is lost when the last part of the poem is withheld. It bids us recall Stephens’s description of the innocent and religiously motivated love felt among members of the Willard choir, and his musical friends, both male and female. He saw the Willard choir as “a great good-natured family.”244 His analogy of the family would apply also to the Tabernacle Choir in Salt Lake City. Stephens stressed the lifelong importance of faithfulness among such friends, as does the poem, and wrote to the children that he yet regarded “the men and boys of my early youth as equal to any I have known and life has given me no treasures greater than the friends whom I loved as a boy.”245 The poem Friends continues to be used today among the Stephens family and relatives to celebrate family loyalty, comradeship, and Christian devotion to one another.

In discussing the article that contained the poem, Stephens specifically related the choir’s 1911 success to the preparations begun in his early days in Salt Lake City. He found that the “major part of the singers who sang . . . in the great cities of the

242 Children’s Friend (July 1920): 276.
243 Children’s Friend (June 1920): 228.
244 Children’s Friend (November 1919): 433, emphasis added.
245 Children’s Friend (October 1919): 387.
east were the very same little boys and girls, and young people who came to my classes . . . in 1882, now grown into middle-aged women and men—putting into practice what they learned to do in their youth, under my direction."246 They were friends who were "faithful, loyal through life's span." He further used this illustration to remind the Primary teachers of the importance of giving the children a good and sure foundation for their progress. Others observed Stephens's "labors" among the children and youth, and the true friendship he displayed: "Professor Stephens saw the children of his early choruses grow to manhood and womanhood, and he watched their course in life with tender affection. . . . No father could be prouder than he is of their success."247

Regarding his first experience in a choir in Salt Lake City, Stephens recalls the genial director "filling every heart with a feeling of welcome and brotherly love."248 Stephens devoutly sought that spirit when he directed his singers, so that they "not only learned to love to sing and read music, but even learned to greatly love one another,"249 an allusion to John 13:34–35. He saw the strength and success of the Tabernacle Choir in "our having learned to love both the work and one another."250 When the choir returned from its tour in 1911, it sang in the Tabernacle for "loved ones and friends."251 Stephens likened the performance before the large audience to the well-known concept of the Christian agape, saying that there were "tears of joy and love upon many cheeks," and that "it was not only a wonderful musical performance, but a great love feast."252

The term love feast comes from the epistle of Jude (Jude 1:12 NRSV),253 which warns Christians against permitting apostates to defile their gatherings. The text draws a sharp contrast between godly love and the lust of those who "pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness," following the example of Sodom and

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246 Children's Friend (July 1920): 276.
248 Children's Friend (November 1919): 432, emphasis added.
249 Children's Friend (July 1920): 276, emphasis added.
250 Ibid.
251 Children's Friend (June 1920): 230.
252 Children's Friend (July 1920): 276, emphasis added.
253 KJV "feasts of charity"; compare Moroni 7:47–48.
Gomorrah and others (Jude 1:3–7 NRSV). The early church was further warned:

These are grumblers and malcontents; they indulge their own lusts; they are bombastic in speech, flattering people to their own advantage. But you, beloved, must remember the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; for they said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, indulging their own ungodly lusts.” It is these worldly people, devoid of the Spirit, who are causing divisions. But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. (Jude 1:16–21 NRSV)

Stephens’s use of the phrase a great love feast evokes the image of the highest form of Christian piety, the agape-theology of the ancient saints.254 This is the kind of sincere and chaste Christian love reflected in the poem, or it would not have been placed in an article about the choir. It shows the relevance of the “lived and loved together” at the opening of the poem. As historian Donald Yacovone has stressed, the warm language referring to such love derives from traditional Christian or New Testament usage. In suggesting something other than a chaste allusion, Quinn has joined those “historians of gay and lesbian life [who] have distorted our view of pre-modern and pre-Freudian sexuality and culture by mistaking the language of religious ecstasy and sincerity, or agape, for homoeroticism or outright homosexuality.”255

In reflecting on the cultural aspects of the poem, we are impressed by the family imagery which undergirds it, so that it is not only applicable to the choir in a poetic and figurative sense, but reflects also Stephens’s extensive experience with family life. This


is why the “slept together” is a poetic expression and has nothing to do with bed sharing, but with the concept of “shared home life” as expressed by the editors. Thus the poem mentions sleeping, waking, common eating and conversation—a participation in the association, schedule, and economy of the home and family. Beyond the immediate family of his childhood, Stephens always maintained a close and loving association with his relatives and extended family. Obviously he preferred to dwell in a family setting, and chose to live for many years with other families that remained dear to him. These included Shadrach Jones and his wife, Bishop George W. Ward and his family, and John J. Ward and his wife in Willard; the Alexander Lewis family in Logan, Utah; and, most importantly, Latter-day Saint musician and hymn composer Henry A. Tuckett in Salt Lake City.256 Of the Tucketts, Stephens recalled that he “was warmly welcomed into their little home. And though there was lacking room in the house for a separate bed room, the lounge and the parlor floor upon which to sleep were at my disposal, and I was made very comfortable.”257 Stephens wrote that upon his arrival there in 1882, “I made my home for some years with him [Tuckett] and his good wife, and I shall ever think with pleasure of the many many evenings we spent together at the little organ, either discussing our own efforts or poring over the masterworks.”258 The “little white cot” [cottage], as Stephens called it, became a mecca for musicians to gather very frequently and perform music for each other and the many neighbors who were invited to listen. Soprano Agnes Olsen Thomas met Stephens there, and he became a very fast and dear

256 Bergman, Children Sang, 57, 61, 64, 69, 81. See also obituary of Mrs. John J. Ward, in Brigham City, Utah News-Journal, 2 January 1941, 1. See also Box Elder Lore of the Nineteenth Century (Brigham City, Utah: Sons of Utah Pioneers, 1951), 135, and Lydia Walker Forsgren, comp., History of Box Elder County (Brigham City, Utah: Box Elder County Daughters of the Pioneers, 1937), 178.
friend.” She has left her description of these enthusiastic gatherings: “dear friends surrounded a small reed organ at which this genius was presiding. He could make the organ speak. Then all joined in song.” 259 Stephens wrote that “a very happy little group we were, forever, of evenings, either trying over my music or [Tuckett’s], or that of Handel, Verdi, Wagner, etc.” with the “leading young singers of the city” enjoying the hospitality and friendly association in the home. 260 Such sociable evenings may well be reflected in the poem and began in the very year that Stephens said was the beginning of those friendships with persons who toured later with the choir. They included some of the very persons, Agnes Olsen Thomas among them, who were “middle-aged” participants in the choir’s 1911 tour.

Stephens’s Welsh culture has also influenced the language and imagery of the poem, an important aspect totally ignored by Quinn. Anthropologist Carol Trosset, in a study of “Welsh concepts of person and society,” has shown that among the Welsh “anything to do with people should be approached emotionally,” or “emotional engagement is the correct approach to people.” 261 This explains much about Stephens and the effusive mode of expression exemplified in this poem. Trosset added that

Welsh people seemed to me very emotional and effusive compared to what had been typical behavior in my home communities in the United States. Warmth is communicated through verbal content, tone of voice, and physical contact. . . . People also touch each other (in nonsexual ways) more than I was used to. A great deal of physical affection is directed toward both children and teenagers, but can also be observed between adult friends. 262

Recollections from members of the Stephens family also help explain the poem in the context of Evan’s own family experience.

259 Agnes Olsen Thomas, autobiography, as quoted in Bergman, Children Sang, 87.
261 Trosset, Welshness Performed, 150, and title page. The quotation comes from the chapter entitled “Being an Emotional Person.”
262 Ibid., 150.
Melba Thomas Jones recalled that when her uncle Evan Stephens visited her family home in St. John, Idaho, Evan and her father would outlast the rest of the family and relatives and would talk, sing, and recite poetry “all night.” Relatives recall that the Welsh lifestyle of the family was intense and emotional “whether it was eating, sleeping, talking, singing, arguing, or making up with hugs or exuberant handshakes.” Certainly this style of family life was experienced by Evan Stephens in his home during both his childhood and in his adult years, especially in the Welsh communities of Willard, Utah, and St. John and Malad, Idaho, and among Welsh friends in Salt Lake City where he participated in Welsh organizations and musical activities. This kind of effusive family celebration is still found among Stephens’s Welsh relatives in 1998, as it is in Wales. Recently a travel writer observed this style of Welsh renewal which can be experienced anywhere in Wales today: “It can be a wonderful thing for an outsider to behold, even if it does occasionally keep you up at night.”

**Hint and Run**

As previously noted, those who stayed in Stephens’s home recall that he slept downstairs separated from the guests. Quinn infers that Stephens was not heterosexual merely because young men boarded with him; and he implies that these young men were not heterosexual because they boarded with Stephens. This is, of course, preposterous. The young people came from Latter-day Saint homes where they would have been taught strict moral standards. Parents wanted them in Stephens’s home precisely because it was a moral and protective environment for them.

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263 Betty Hammond, tape recorded interview of Melba Thomas Jones, Malad, Idaho, 3 May 1996.
264 Rhett S. James, interview of Maude Thomas, Malad, Idaho, 30 December 1996.
266 Melba Thomas Jones, grand-niece of Evan Stephens and sister of Thomas Stephens Thomas, discussed below, recalls that “Uncle Evan—we children called him ‘Professor’ in those days—he slept in his own room on the main floor. Strict rules governed [those] who slept there.” Rhett S. James interview with Melba Thomas Jones cited above.
while they furthered their education. When directly confronted with these anomalies, even prior to the publication of *Same-Sex Dynamics*, Quinn admitted that Stephens possibly never engaged in same-gender sexual conduct. Why would Quinn quickly run from some of his most bizarre conclusions?

All that we know of Stephens’s nephews and students indicates a strong heterosexual orientation. Each of these men married, and only Noel S. Pratt was childless. In an insinuating note, Quinn says that Pratt “did not marry until age thirty-six, divorced shortly afterward, and died shortly after that” (p. 237). What he does not tell us is the likely reason he did not marry sooner. For many years, Pratt was tormented with severe pain because of a rheumatic illness that eventually led to his untimely death. Eliese Peterson, of Logan, Utah, who married Pratt, loved him enough to marry him despite this hardship. And it does not appear that they divorced, for Stephens left a bequest for Pratt’s widow in his will (p. 241). The *Deseret News* reported her as Pratt’s widow. At his final illness, Stephens referred to him as “one of my ‘Boys,’ Judge Noel S. Pratt.” Stephens had assisted Pratt to study law in Utah and at the University of Oregon. Returning to Utah, he became a lawyer and judge and was highly respected.

So overwhelming is the evidence of the marriages of these young men, without a single exception, that at one point Quinn is compelled to concede that “if there was any unexpressed erotic desire, it is possible that only Stephens felt it, since all his ‘boy chums’ eventually married” (p. 242). What evidence does Quinn present that Stephens “felt it”? Only his imagination, for Quinn admits that “it can only be a matter of speculation whether Stephens had sex with any of the young men he loved, lived with, and slept with throughout most of his life” (p. 242). But Quinn also grants that “homoerotic desire could have been absent altogether or unconsciously sublimated or consciously suppressed”

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269 Ibid.
270 Bergman, *Children Sang*, 246.
271 “City Judge Pratt of Salt Lake Dies,” 1. Several very prominent members of the community spoke at his funeral.
in Stephens (p. 242). Quinn seems to want to protect himself by having it both ways. He tries to bolster his conjectures with a quotation from Stephens that some of his personal experience is "even too sacred to be told freely[,] only to myself" (p. 242). Quinn juxtaposes this statement with his innuendo-filled discussion of sexual matters, and one is led to believe there must be something perverse going on in the Stephens home. But the language quoted by Quinn comes from an entirely different context, in Stephens's recollection of his early life before he boarded students in his Salt Lake City home. It is far more likely alluding to the "lost love" when he anticipated marriage and to a comforting spiritual witness he had that eventually God would "wipe away all tears" (Revelation 21:4), a theme so well expressed by Stephens in his poem emphasizing fulfillment through death and resurrection that we have already quoted.

Samuel B. Mitton is another of Stephens's friends subjected to Quinn's innuendo. While Mitton never boarded in the Stephens home, Quinn nonetheless assigns him to be one of Stephens's "significant 'boy chums'" (p. 235, 433). Quinn has selected the wrong man to play his game. Mitton's life is unusually well documented, and his strict moral commitments are evident in his writings, as well as in the minds of many still living who remember him. In addition to a biography by his son-in-law, we have Mitton's many-volumed journal, a recorded oral history, many newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, numerous letters, including over seventy from Evan Stephens, and hundreds of poems, songs, hymns, and anthems that Mitton composed.

Mitton was happily married for sixty-six years and fully devoted to his wife and seven children. His values are reflected in his long and dedicated service as an LDS missionary, choir director, organist, high councilor, temple worker, and patriarch. But they are reflected even more in his expressive writings. "This lovely girl," he wrote concerning his future wife, "completely captivated me. It was love at first sight on my part. She was so sweet and beautiful in feature and graceful in form, and natural goodness

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273 A selection of twelve of Stephens's letters is included in Bergman, Children Sang, 225–46.
fairly radiated from her face." The affectionate and sensitive love letters of his courtship were included in his biography. These family documents were known to Quinn, but he completely ignored them, for they make his innuendoes seem ridiculous. Mitton’s heterosexual orientation is clear in his correspondence and in many tender poems and songs he wrote for his wife. He held the church leaders in the highest esteem. His writings and conduct make clear that the gospel of Jesus Christ was the central motivation of his life, and all his musical interests and associations were intended to advance its cause.

Mitton met Stephens when he was seventeen and Stephens was twenty-six and they were organists in different LDS communities. They met when they both played at a Sunday School conference or “Jubilee.” Their common interest in the furtherance of sacred music formed a bond between them. “Oh, how I loved music,” Samuel exclaimed, “it constantly dominated my thoughts... I loved and idolized all musicians. To me those who could sing and play were extraordinary and gifted people. I revered the great composers.” “My earliest recollection is my fondness for music,” he wrote in his journal. “I was self taught,” he said, and “there weren’t any music teachers in the valley.” It must have been a joy to him to meet Stephens, who could give him some encouragement and assistance. Samuel continued, recalling that

The first music copies I had access to were the Sunday School songs and hymns as printed in the Juvenile Instructor. Evan Stephens contributed regularly

275 Ibid., 8–27.
276 Ibid., 28–35, for examples taken from a “book of songs given to Mary.”
278 Lindblad, Samuel Bailey Mitton, 69.
279 Ibid.
280 Ibid., 67.
281 Ibid., 68.
to this magazine. I am free to say Evan Stephens became my ideal as a composer and continued so throughout my life. We later became very close friends and kept up a regular correspondence.282

Mitton and Stephens did not live near each other, but they did meet from time to time, on such occasions as when Mitton and his wife Mary called to chat with him in Salt Lake City, or went there for special musical events, or when Stephens had Mitton’s music performed in the Salt Lake Tabernacle. On the other hand, Stephens visited the Mitton home when Samuel performed some of Stephens’s new music with his Logan choir. In every instance, other members of the Mitton family or friends visited with Stephens when Samuel met with him.283 When he came in 1920 to help rehearse Samuel’s choir to perform his cantata “The Vision,” Stephens “stayed in Logan for several days visiting with Samuel and Mary and their family.”284 Stephens admired Mitton’s married life and family. Evan wrote to Samuel: “How blessed you are with your justly idolized partner.”285

Stephens’s letters to Mitton often appear directed to the family, as well as to him. Mitton’s daughter remembers how the family loved and admired Evan Stephens and would gather around to hear his letters read, usually by her because she seemed best able to read Stephens’s difficult hand.286 The letters strongly reflect their common musical interests, and in many of them Stephens is giving his appraisal and advice for improvement regarding compositions Mitton had sent him for that purpose. Clearly, Mitton considered him his mentor in music, and was deeply appreciative of Stephens’s interest in his musical endeavors. Quinn, grasping

282 Ibid.
283 Ibid., 79–82, 84, 86, 89, 278, 280, referring to Mitton’s journals. Mitton did not own or drive an automobile, so he was always dependent on and accompanied by others when he visited Stephens’s home.
284 Ibid., 82.
285 Ibid., 294. Bergman has noted that Stephens “never espoused marriage and only vicariously admired families such as Samuel Mitton’s, where children and a devoted wife and husband lived together in harmony,” in “Author Disputes Quinn on Life of Evan Stephens.”
286 Mary Mitton Kennedy, interviewed by George L. Mitton, Salt Lake City, 17 June 1997.
for sexual content, stresses that they signed letters with “love” (p. 235). The documents suggest a Christian brotherly love and that “warm language between friends” was normal at the time (p. 232). Actually, the term is not frequent in the letters, which always display a certain reserve. Stephens’s normal salutation was “Dear Bro. Mitton,” never using the given name, and his closing was more typically “best regards from your friend and Bro.” This is a common Mormon reference to brotherhood in the kingdom of God. Expressions such as “Love to you and all” appear several times, usually before the close, and directed to all the family.

Mitton wrote in his journal at the death of Stephens: “No one will know what a loss his passing is to me. The world will never seem the same to me again” (p. 240). Mitton added these brief words that summarize their true interests and relationship: “Thus closed the mortal life of my dearest, sweetest friend and benefactor, Evan Stephens, Zion’s greatest composer and song writer.”

**Stephens and His Nephew Thomas Stephens Thomas**

Evan Stephens’s grand-nephew, Thomas Stephens Thomas, came from Idaho to board in his home in Salt Lake City and attend the Latter-day Saints’ University, where he could prepare himself to go to New York to attend the Columbia Medical School. With Stephens’s financial help, Thomas later graduated with a medical degree. Thomas is the only boarder-student that Quinn attempts to discuss in any detail, so we will follow his treat-

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288 Lindblad, *Samuel Bailey Mitton*, 295. Quinn continues with a bizarre note, saying that Stephens left Mitton out of his will, and that it must have been a “bitter surprise” for Mitton. “Despite full access to his diaries, Mitton’s biographer made no reference to his exclusion from the will that remembered all of Evan’s other ‘boy chums’ and no mention of Mitton’s reaction to that omission. Either Mitton himself chose not to comment or his biographer chose not to tarnish his narrative of the loving relationship between Mitton and Stephens” (p. 259 n. 76). We have found no mention of the will in Mitton’s diary and suggest a third alternative: that the whole idea is ridiculous, for Mitton had no reason whatsoever to believe he should be included in Stephens’s will.
ment closely. Quinn’s discussion of this fine young man and his relationship with Stephens shows the use of innuendo at its extreme. It is instructive to see how Quinn weaves his homosexual bias around these two heterosexual men, not only in a tone of gossipy insinuation, but with a series of falsehoods that we will expose.

Stephens, always loyal to family, had reason to feel joy in his nephew’s accomplishments. Many were made possible by Stephens’s financial and moral support. Harold Jensen, a friend of both Stephens and his nephew, referred to Thomas as “put in the way of success by Professor Stephens,” and described him as “a blonde Viking who captured the eye of everyone as a superb specimen of manhood.” Why should we infer that he had nonheterosexual tendencies on the basis of that complimentary remark, which the context shows to be innocent? Yet Quinn seeks to create that impression by suggestive comments: he was, Quinn surmises, perhaps Stephens’s “live-in boyfriend,” or his association provided Stephens with his “most intense relationship with a male,” and Thomas was “the love of his life” (pp. 237, 238, 255 n. 52). These imaginings are gratuitous and offered by Quinn for effect.

Thomas’s photograph appeared in the college yearbook for 1914, and he was a handsome, mature-looking man. He was also a popular and socially active student, having been in the debating club and a class officer and president. The caption, like those with the photographs of other students, has a lighthearted comment: “Aye, every inch a king,” and “Also a ‘Queener’” (p. 238). Quinn latches onto the word “Queen,” claiming that the term “Queen was slang for male homosexual by the 1920s” (p. 257 n. 66). But the term is not “Queen” but “Queener.” Here it is necessary to determine what this word meant to the university students in 1914, and this Quinn has not done. In a student publication at the very time Stephens’s nephew was there, we find that it actually referred to someone who courted the girls, as in this

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290 The S Book, Commencement Number (Salt Lake City: Students of the Latter-day Saints’ University, 1914), 12, 38.
291 Quinn, “Male-Male Intimacy,” 123 n. 76
humorous student verse: "Pretty girls in the class can be found there galore; Rhada, Marion, and Daphne, and some dozens more. If you wished to advantage their "Queeners" to see, Just peep in the Library at two forty-three." 292 The context shows the heterosexual pairing of men and women. The same publication's alumni column later recalled the nephew as "the idol of all the girls." 293 This agrees with more general word studies where, in college use, circa 1915, queen as a verb meant "to go on a date or escort a girl" and queener was "a ladies man." 294 The same usage was reported at Stanford University where "Those students who find time to court the women are called 'queeners.'" 295

Nevertheless, Quinn uses a false idea to create a wrong impression, when in fact it does not relate to Stephens and his nephew in any way. Next, he does this again in another bogus passage. Thomas, according to Quinn,

accompanied Stephens on the choir's month-long trip to the eastern states in 1911. . . . However, the choir's business manager, George D. Pyper, discreetly deleted Thomas's name from the passenger list of the choir and "tourists" as published by the church's official magazine, Improvement Era. Pyper had apparently been uncomfortable about same-sex relationships since 1887, when he served as the judge in the first trial of a sensational sodomy case involving teenagers" (p. 238).

There are serious problems in this assertion. First, the list does not appear in the Improvement Era, but in the Juvenile Instructor, although Quinn does manage to cite correctly the volume and page number (pp. 255–56 n. 54). 296 This was the magazine of

292 Gold and Blue (Commencement Number, 1912): 47.
293 Gold and Blue 16 (April 1916): 290.
294 Harold Wentworth and Stuart Berg Flexner, eds., Dictionary of American Slang (New York: Crowell, 1960), 415. Quinn is aware of this work, for he uses it in another connection (p. 101 n. 29).
296 The correct citation is [George D. Pyper], "Six Thousand Miles with the 'Mormon' Tabernacle Choir: Impressions of the Manager," Juvenile Instructor 47 (March 1912): 132–33.
the Sunday School, of which Pyper was associate editor. Quinn misleads his readers. When we checked his reference we found that, contrary to his assertion, Stephens’s nephew was listed as a member of the choir on the trip. This fact undercuts Quinn’s argument. Nor can it be saved by mind-reading what Pyper “really” had in mind. Pyper, we have shown, always had great respect for Stephens.297 One should note also, that if it would have been “discreet” to delete the name, Quinn has again contradicted his basic premise that the community was relatively tolerant of homosexual conduct. And why would faithful Latter-day Saints have been more suspicious of the nephew on a trip surrounded by the entire choir, than of his openly boarding in Stephens’s home, which was common knowledge? Quinn’s treatment of Thomas is a jumble of self-contradictions.

We now confront the question of why Stephens resigned as director of the Tabernacle Choir in 1916. Quinn mistakenly says it was so he could “continue living with” his nephew (p. 238). We quote here the passage from which Quinn claims to derive the idea, with his quotation in italics. Stephens says that he

was honorably released at my own request under such arrangements as would leave me free to travel or reside, if I wished, at New York City, where I was taking a nephew I was educating as a physician, to enter Columbia University. After some months there feasting upon opera, concerts, etc., returned home to attend to home and garden; and settle down to composition and my ease.298

On the basis of this language, Quinn incorrectly asserts that “Stephens gave up his career for the ‘blond Viking’ who became the love of his life” (p. 238). The expression “blond Viking” is, of course, not Stephens’s, and for Quinn to refer to Stephens’s nephew as the “love of his life” is without textual support, and he callously ignores the grief and sorrows Stephens had known in the

298 Evan Stephens, “The Life Story of Evan Stephens,” Instructor (March 1931): 133. Quinn observes that Stephens places this event in 1914 rather than 1916 in this account. But the editor noted that it came from penciled notes found among his effects. Probably it was a draft and not in final form.
past over the loss of his "Weber girl" and his courtship of Sarah. Beyond that, Stephens does not actually say that visiting his nephew was the reason for his resignation, but only that it was on terms that permitted him to be free of any remaining obligations. If it were to be regarded as a reason, it is simplistic, allowing Stephens to avoid discussing in public the real causes of his leaving, which involved differences over how the choir should be managed, and a sixty-year-old man's general fatigue after twenty-six years of gathering volunteer singers into a high quality choir. Surely Quinn knows this. He must, since he concedes in a note that his idea "could be disputed" (p. 256 n. 57). In a private letter to Samuel B. Mitton, Stephens explained:

> I, at the end of my Choir journey wish you much success and joy in yours on which you are just starting. The entire trouble here is the growth of conflicting duties to which my singers are subject, and which impeded our progress to such a degree that I can rely practically on no results from our best efforts. I have tried hard to have something done whereby the Choir should not be the one to suffer, but the local authorities of wards and stakes from which our singers are drawn oppose any action which may draw them from any activities at home, that the presidency feel they cannot afford to fight them over the matter. So we have all agreed to try the "new broom" idea to see if it will help to at least aid for the time being.

> While it is a disappointment to me not to be able to get the material I needed for the sort of work I wanted to do, and there is a natural sadness in giving up one's life work as it were. Still it is a great relief to have the many burdens removed, and to at least be released from trying the impossible. I expect to spend most of the fall and winter—perhaps in New York, just taking in the musical things of the metropolis. I am grateful to you for your enthusiastic support by using and liking
my songs. Let me hear from you once in a while. I am ever your Bro. E. Stephens. 299

In September 1916 Stephens traveled east with his nephew and a fellow student, who were going to medical school at the time. Stephens planned a trip to enjoy the musical performances. The Deseret News reported that Stephens and his nephew stayed at a hotel (for effect Quinn calls this their “living arrangements”), until his nephew found housing with fellow students of Columbia University (pp. 238–39). In a richly documented visit, Stephens enjoyed a very busy musical season in New York, returning to Utah early in December. 300

We now encounter some of the most questionable scholarship in Quinn’s entire book. Quinn writes:

Stephens later indicated that Thomas’s intended student-living arrangement did not alter his “desire” to be near the young man. A few weeks after the Deseret News article, the police conducted a well-publicized raid on a homosexual bathhouse in New York City. (p. 239)

As we will show, Stephens later “indicated” nothing like that, and did not even mention his nephew’s living arrangement. Quinn apparently uses the word “desire” to suggest a sexual connotation not found in the text. Similarly, the gratuitous reference to the bathhouse has nothing to do with Stephens and his nephew. Quinn does not even identify where it was and does not establish any connection whatever with Stephens. More subtle innuendo—it is all there for the impression, with no substance behind it. In a note, Quinn claims that a well-known bathhouse was “only a few blocks from the hotel where Stephens and his ‘boy chum’ were staying,” but then is forced to admit that it probably had not operated for thirteen years before the arrival of Stephens and Thomas (p. 256 n. 59). Nonetheless, Quinn has planted the seed with his reference to a bathhouse. Why does Quinn mention the

bathhouse, unless to create a phony impression? As for the word desire, it comes from an interview in Utah months later, soon after a wonderful testimonial for Stephens in the Salt Lake Tabernacle,\(^{301}\) where a reporter asked Stephens about his activities now that he no longer had the responsibility for the choir. In genial comments Stephens talked about his vegetable garden, his many new compositions,\(^{302}\) and his intent to attend several concerts to honor him around the West. He then touched on his “desire” to travel, saying:

_Add to these a long _desired_ trip to California, where some dear friends of mine have recently become interested in an orange grove, coupled with a _desire_ to return ere long to my nephew, Mr. Thomas, in New York, and you will realize that I am not pining away from ennui, but that I am following the bent which I always intended to do after retiring from active public work.\(^{303}\)_

Compare this with the claim Quinn bases upon it. Clearly Stephens did not “indicate” anything of what he thought of his nephew’s living arrangements, but Quinn leaves the impression that he did.

We come to one more indignity brought about by another of Quinn’s groundless statements. He says that “Stephens apparently returned later that spring [1917] and took up residence in the East Village of lower Manhattan, which is where the census indicated Thomas was living” (p. 239). “Apparently” from what? Quinn has substituted his wishful thinking for research. The truth is that Stephens never “took up residence” in New York at any time.\(^{304}\)

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\(^{301}\) “Stephens’ Great Testimonial,” _Deseret Evening News_, 7 April 1917, sec. 1, p. 16.


\(^{303}\) “Professor Stephens Enlists as a Food Producer,” _Deseret Evening News_, 21 April 1917, sec. 2, p. 6, emphasis added.

\(^{304}\) Stephens never retired from choirs and music in Utah. Soon after returning to Utah from his musical jaunt in November 1917, Stephens was appointed musical director of Granite Stake, to work with the congregations to improve the musical work, as he said, “for the people of the stake in which I re-
Stephens certainly did not go there to live with his nephew, who continued to live with fellow students. As for the census, it was not taken for three years, and by that time Thomas was living with his wife (p. 258 n. 68). Quinn fashions a false picture of the two men. He launches into a lurid discussion of homosexual activities near the Village, none of which has a thing to do with Stephens and Thomas. Quinn then incorrectly claims that Thomas apparently wanted to avoid the stigma of being called a New York "fairy," which had none of the light-hearted ambiguity of the "Queener" nickname from his school days in Utah. Unlike the openness of his co-residence with Stephens in Utah, Thomas never listed his Village address in the New York City directories (p. 239).

This discussion assumes things about the men which are false and inconsistent with the known facts concerning their lives. Again Quinn ignores the fact that "Queener" simply meant a lady's man and not a "Queen," as in current homosexual usage. It is absurd to suppose that Thomas, or anyone else, would be more sensitive among New York's millions than in Mormon Utah. Most likely Thomas's name did not appear in the city directories because he was living in student housing, which would be regarded as temporary. Thomas's "openness" living in Utah goes a long way to establish the falsity of Quinn's assertions. Stephens was to see his nephew briefly during his musical excursions to

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305 A correspondent in New York mentions that the house, occupied by the eight students, "two of whom are well known Utah boys," had a fire and all moved to another house, also near the medical school. One was the "nephew of Prof. Evan Stephens." Note how the reporter uses boys here. "Salt Lakers in Gotham," Deseret Evening News, 10 March 1917, sec. 2, p. 7.
New York in the fall of 1917,\textsuperscript{306} and again two years later in 1919, when he noted that it had been two years since “I left my youngest ‘boy’” for him to “work out his medical salvation at that chief seat of medical torture for ambitious young doctors, Columbia University.”\textsuperscript{307} Note that from 1917 through 1919, Stephens could not have done what Quinn would have us believe—that he “took up residence” in New York with his nephew, having resigned his leadership of the choir to do so. In his 1919 visit, Stephens was able to meet Thomas’s fiancée, and he met with the couple several times during his stay.\textsuperscript{308} Their marriage occurred soon after, in December 1919.\textsuperscript{309} In 1923, while on a trip East to make some recordings, Stephens “had a nice visit with my dear Boy Tom who is doing just fine as a Doctor in Morristown, New Jersey.” He stayed “with him and his good wife for nine days, running over to New York City to see the town, the sights and the shows.”\textsuperscript{310} Stephens continued to show interest in the success of his nephew and in his wife and children.

**Stephens’s Travels to New York City**

Evan Stephens liked to travel and many times journeyed to New York or the West Coast to enjoy the musical performances there.\textsuperscript{311} Quinn holds that “whenever Stephens took a long trip, he traveled with a younger male companion, usually unmarried” (p. 236). This is not exactly true, for we are aware of several journeys he took alone.\textsuperscript{312} On one occasion he traveled with his niece, when she went to study at the University of California.\textsuperscript{313} Indeed,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{308} “Dr. Thomas S. Thomas Marries in New York,” Deseret Evening News, 16 December 1919, sec. 2, p. 10.
  \item \textsuperscript{309} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{310} Evan Stephens to Samuel B. Mitton, 10 October 1923. Photocopy in our possession.
  \item \textsuperscript{311} “Prof. Stephens Dilates on Coast Climate and San Francisco Music,” Deseret Evening News, 6 July 1918, sec. 3, p. 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{312} For example, “Stephens Back from Eastern Musical Jaunt,” Deseret Evening News, 24 November 1917, sec. 2, p. 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{313} “Late Locals,” Deseret Evening News, 15 June 1918, sec. 1, p. 2.
\end{itemize}
on another trip while traveling to New York alone, he showed his enjoyment of feminine companionship, when he chanced to meet a woman from Utah on the train: "I was right glad to find that my good friend . . . had had the good judgment and taste to take the same train, and we enjoyed some interesting chats in our journey across the continent." Similarly, in New York, "on my way to the oratorio, whom should I meet but our own Lucy Gates just arrived from home, looking as fine as I ever saw her. We are only a few blocks apart and I hope to see her often." Quinn demonstrates a very mistaken view of Stephens.

Nevertheless, Stephens did not like to travel alone and often traveled with men. He also often traveled with Sarah Daniels, frequently accompanied by two married couples or more, as shown in his photojournal. This was only proper etiquette for a bachelor. He also saw travel as an educational experience for the young men or young women. After a trip to California to arrange for a tour of the Tabernacle Choir, Stephens said he "had the very pleasant companionship of one of my coming singers, Mr. Noel Pratt, who helped me in many ways, but most of all in witnessing the delight an enthusiastic young person feels in seeing the wonders of the western coast for the first time." As usual on this trip, Stephens arranged a busy schedule of operas and theatricals. In his trips to the East to attend musical performances, Stephens maintained a very heavy schedule, writing perceptive descriptions and critiques to the newspaper at home. In reviewing published letters, Quinn displays poor judgment when he sees homosexual allusions everywhere he looks. The common terms and expressions of Stephens’s day take on a special meaning for him. Doubtless Stephens’s honest simplicity and forthright manner concerning

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315 Internationally famous soprano from Utah.
317 Perhaps Quinn will be corrected by Stephens’s phrenological reading: "He is capable of very strong affection, is fully alive to the charms of the gentler sex, will be gallant in his deportment towards them, and if he had children would be apt to spoil them with over indulgence." Pyper, "Something about Evan Stephens," 495.
318 “Stephens Home from California,” Deseret Evening News, 6 November 1902, 1.
such matters leave him vulnerable to Quinn's "specialized" manner of interpretation. In reality, an exemplary innocence is reflected in Stephens's delightful writings. It would never have occurred to his contemporaries that someone would try to interpret his words in the way Quinn seeks to do.

An example of Quinn's technique comes from his discussion of a letter from 1916, when Stephens wrote for the Deseret News a long and remarkable description of the musical scene from "Gay New York." Quinn quotes this in a way to imply this was Stephens's term, but again it was not. Instead it was the headline writer in Salt Lake City who used the term gay, not Stephens. Yet it was an apt word to use for the musical events described in the basic sense of gay, which then had no homosexual connotations. Quinn apparently thinks that the reader will assume that it did, and thus put a color on the whole article that was never intended at the time. "Gay New York" has been a tedious cliché, at least since the 1896 Broadway musical "In Gay New York" with its title song. It comes from a period known to all as the "Gay Nineties," and certainly not because it was a homosexual heyday. Quinn, however, incorrectly uses the term to launch into another lurid but irrelevant sexual discussion.

As we have seen, Quinn thinks it important that Evan Stephens's hotel in New York was within a few blocks of a former homosexual bathhouse that was raided and closed many years earlier (p. 256 n. 59). What has this to do with Stephens? The hotel was probably near trash cans also, but that does not mean that he rummaged in them. Stephens has left his own explanation of his hotel choice. It was "clean and quiet, and within a block of the most beautiful park on the earth, Central Park . . . [and] also within a 20 minute walk of the center of theatricals and even

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320 Webster's Word Histories (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1989), 90.
322 "No one has questioned . . . the fitness of gay nineties as a tag for the fashions of the decade with their frills and furbelows." American Speech 26/3 (October 1951): 227.
nearer to the high musical halls where I expect to study." Quinn’s discussion again just creates another false impression.

In the same way, Quinn would also destroy Stephens’s memory of Central Park. The visiting Utahn wrote:

Broadway touches the opposite corner of the park of which I am as regular a patron as the sheep and goats grazing on its grassy dales or the geese and swans that grace its dozens of ponds and lakes. There I spend hours walking from one end to the other—or sitting reading the war news, sometimes in a shady nook, sometimes in a sunny one, for you never know which you may have in New York. Cold and heat play hide and seek here.

This pastoral image is shattered with Quinn’s jarring claim that a simple stroll through Central Park becomes “homosexual ‘cruising’” (p. 257 n. 60)—a false claim when the entire passage is read in context. In order to show the absurdity of Quinn’s assertion, we quote from Stephens’s letter to the newspaper sufficient to give a feel for the context, again showing Quinn’s quoted excerpt in italics. The Deseret News headline writer mentioned above subtitled this section of the letter “Poetic Thoughts.” We give the passage in full.

The great open sea! The sight of land again, the thrill of it all, the joys of meetings, the pains of partings—all seem to rush upon one as he gazes out at a nearing steamer or follows into the dim “open distance” some departing vessel. The deck upon which I stand is only that of an ugly ferry, but these associations make me learn to love it as I do a lovely garden. It is like standing upon a firm, though floating, pedestal with the whole great wide wonderful world laid out before me, and I feel like shouting out to it, “O, beautiful earth! How I love the great home God has created for his creatures and his children! If only strife, pain and

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323 "Prof. Stephens in New York."
324 Ibid.
death were no more in it, as at first, how blessed it would be to roam over its surface forever more!"

My musical friends must pardon me. I would not be giving a correct report to you if I did not acknowledge that these nature treats are a source of even greater pleasure to me out here than those supplied by the numerous musical treats I enjoy. Indeed, I find that music and art are only a personal, more or less imperfect expression of the emotions awakened by nature, and the pleasure we derive from seeing or hearing is to a degree but the renewal of similar feelings created some time or other by nature herself, perhaps away back in our childhood.

You see the park has widened out into ocean and country, but it is still true to Central park. It is a miniature picture of the whole of things, ocean, mountains and humans, of all descriptions, so I still love it and its flotsam of lonely souls—like myself—who wander into its retreats for some sort of companionship—the squirrels, if nothing better, and to commune with nature. So I am still numbered among its "tramps." 325

Quinn expects readers to believe this is "a description of the common practice of seeking same-sex intimacy with strangers in Central Park" (p. 239, 428), suggesting that Stephens, a most respectable fellow, would be involved in such a degrading and promiscuous practice. The full text of Stephens’s remarks does not support Quinn’s claim. Quinn provides no evidence of "homosexuals" hunting for companions in Central Park in 1916. It is certainly possible, and one may imagine some sought adulterous heterosexual relationships as well, but such activities do not preclude an innocent stroll in the park by devout persons having disciplined strict Christian morals—who also love to commune with nature. And why should Stephens be lonely, when he is so near “the love of his life?” Again Quinn is “overwhelmed” with his own imagination.

325 "Stephens Writes of Musical Events in Gay New York."
The Real Evan Stephens

Quinn’s treatment of Evan Stephens and his friends is simply reprehensible; nothing more can be said on the matter. When examined in detail and in context, none of Quinn’s so-called “evidence”—actually reading between the lines—holds up. The large treasure of Stephens’s wonderful and worshipful music and poetry alone witnesses the falsity of Quinn’s claims. It is the undeniable witness of his life’s work, and of his evident interests and purposes. Quinn has given us no reason whatever to believe that his life was not equally pure and chaste and in full accord with Mormon moral standards. Stephens provides a model of conduct for the single Latter-day Saint today—making the best of his situation and leading a chaste and exemplary life of service and piety.

Contemporary commentators praise Stephens for his positive influence and assistance. Harold H. Jensen, who knew Stephens and his youthful friends, was “one of numerous boys Professor Stephens’ influence and life inspired to greater ambition.” Jensen said that “great he was in stature, music and in heart. Few had the sympathetic understanding of youth as did he. Although ... father of none he was father to all.” He further indicated that “many boys would never have fulfilled missions [for the church] had it not been for the help of this man.”326 J. Spencer Cornwall remembered that “Professor Stephens loved the youth of Zion. He was companionable with them and did much for those who came within his charmed circle. The song [“True to the Faith”] was his spiritual advice to them.”327

Representative of what the Brethren thought of Stephens is the praise from Elder John A. Widtsoe, prominent Latter-day Saint educator and apostle, who knew him for many years in both academic and church circles: “A lovable character ... kind, tolerant, generous, a true friend who practiced the obligations of friendship.” Note the emphasis again on the importance of friendship to Stephens. “He loved to seek out young men and become their helper and, as it were, their second father. As he did not live for

glory, these numerous acts of God-like charity shall never be known. . . . He was grateful for goodness shown him, but music, friendship and the vision of the eternal plan of life brought happiness into his life."328

Consistency of Church Teachings on Homosexuality

Implicitly and explicitly Quinn advances his notion that early Mormonism was soft on homosexual conduct and that the Brethren have recently, in his words, "departed significantly from the view of LDS leaders in the nineteenth century, when hom eroerotic activities were clearly regarded as far less serious than adultery" (p. 376). Quinn further says that they "could find no early Mormon leader to quote against homosexuality or homoerotic behaviors" (p. 375). His statements simply are not true. Quinn’s separation here of “homoerotic activities” and adultery is a fundamental error as far as the Latter-day Saints are concerned. The Saints consider that expression nothing but a glib euphemism for homosexual adultery. Such “activities” are seen as a form of adultery and proscribed by every scripture and sermon touching on adultery. Joseph Smith received by revelation an unyielding reaffirmation of the biblical teachings: “Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it” (D&C 59:6).

Much of Latter-day Saint doctrine on the subject derives from strong biblical passages, which latter-day revelations support. The early Latter-day Saints found added confirmation of doctrines in the Bible and were devout believers in it. Orson Spencer, an early convert, wrote in 1842 to his former minister explaining his conversion: “What could I do? Truth had taken possession of my mind—plain, simple, Bible truth.”329 The Bible has many strongly worded passages proscribing homosexual adultery or stressing the gravity of that sin.330 What was Joseph Smith’s view

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329 Orson Spencer, Letters Exhibiting the Most Prominent Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Liverpool: the author, 1848), 9.
330 See the following biblical citations in context: Genesis 13:13; 18:20; 19:5; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Deuteronomy 23:17; 29:23; 32:32; Judges
of these passages? In his inspired review of the Bible, Joseph did not soften any of them. The Prophet either left them unchanged or strengthened them. As an example, we offer what is probably the strongest passage on homosexuality in the Bible, which comes from the New Testament. We give the King James translation, with Joseph’s addition to it in italicized type:

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God according to some knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: and some who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, are inexcusable, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. (Romans 1:24–32)

This is a powerful reaffirmation by Joseph Smith of the biblical position on homosexuality, and the Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints has continually maintained that faithful and un­wavering position and does so at the present time. In 1834, the Prophet Joseph Smith warned Latter-day Saints to avoid “vices of great enormity” practiced by immoral persons, “men giving themselves up to commit acts of the foulest kind, and deeds of the blackest dye,” which include “immorality” and the “loss of natural affection.”

Another early example comes from 1836 and appeared in the church periodical the *Messenger and Advocate*, commenting on the teachings of St. Paul at 1 Corinthians 6:9–10:

Now that his brethren need not be ignorant of what was righteous and what was unrighteous, he particularizes thus, be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. This is language altogether too plain to need comment. Any argument, to either evade or enforce it, is entirely superfluous. We can no more evade it than we can do away a self-evident fact by sophistry: it still tells against the perpetrators of all such crimes, and sounds the knell of departed peace incessantly in their ears. Although such characters may be surrounded with the temporal blessings of a bountiful providence, and riot in voluptuous ease, they are destitute of that peace, that comforter, that leads into all truth, and if we are destitute of that, we have not the spirit of Christ, and if we have not the spirit of Christ, it is plainly said, we are none of his.

It is remarkable that the Brethren discussed sodomy as much as they did, since the incidence of homosexual transgression found in the historical documents has been very low until recently. Quinn could find none until John C. Bennett in 1842, and even this case is conjectural. After that, the next one was thirty-four years later (p. 362). Often the Brethren mentioned it in the

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331 *History of the Church, 2:4.*
332 *Messenger and Advocate 2/12* (September 1836): 376.
context of their observations while on missions to the East or to Europe, urging that such conduct not find its way among the Latter-day Saints. An 1882 sermon of John Taylor illustrates this:

We know the infamies which exist there, the licentiousness, the corruption, the social evil, adulteries, fornication, sodomy, child murder, and every kind of infamy. And they come here and want to teach our children these things. We have got to be careful how we guard our homes, our firesides, our wives, our sons and daughters, from their association. We don’t want these practices insidiously introduced among us. We want to preserve our purity, our virtue, our honor, and our integrity.333

Quinn admits that he has “found relatively few instances of homoerotic activities among Mormons born before 1900” (p. 334). He claims that must be because there was an “unwillingness or inability of early Mormons to recognize homoerotic behaviors” (p. 335), a claim which again belies his basic notion that they were more tolerant then. In what the London Times reviewer refers to kindly as a “dubious extrapolation,”334 Quinn tries to work back from recent surveys to claim there must have been at least 400 times more instances in the past that were not recorded (p. 334)! This is, of course, absurd, and a very poor attempt at social history.

In recent years, there has been a growing concern regarding sexual transgressions of all kinds. Quinn’s final chapter is largely anecdotal, designed to make church leadership appear to temporize or to treat homosexual sins in an uneven way during this period. His evidence is far too limited to be useful, and what he presents is undoubtedly a selection reflecting his own homosexual bias. Appropriately, the church tries to treat these disciplinary

333 Journal of Discourses, 23:269 (8 October 1882), emphasis added. See also the extended discussion by Elder Parley P. Pratt, reviewing basic doctrine on this subject, in “Heirship and Priesthood,” Journal of Discourses, 1:258–59 (10 April 1853). Pratt speaks of “unnatural lusts, appetites, and passions,” and undoubtedly represents here the doctrinal views of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.
problems in the confidence that concerned members have a right to expect; consequently the few items of correspondence or examples of conversations he has been able to adduce, and from which he has made a selection for his own purpose, can scarcely be considered definitive. All along there would have been considerably more discussion entirely unknown to him. Many of these deliberations would have occurred at the local level. Responsible officers have always been taught to be prayerful and seek the guidance of the Spirit in such matters, and no two cases are exactly alike.

Conspicuously absent from Quinn’s discussion is the basic purpose of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to encourage repentance and regeneration, and to bring about greater peace in the lives of its members and families in harmony with God’s law. This is the primary consideration, but one does not learn it from Quinn. It is not edifying to ridicule the efforts of those who are trying to help others overcome their problems. The case of Patriarch Joseph F. Smith II is instructive (pp. 369–71).335 When Smith developed homosexual problems, he was treated with compassion. Quinn almost appears disappointed that Smith was not excommunicated, but was considered ill and in need of rest. By Quinn’s own evidence, it is likely that the medical authorities considered Smith ill and made recommendations in accord with that diagnosis at the time (p. 389 n. 30). The point is that Smith was willing to overcome his problems, and he did. The same compassionate encouragement is available now to those who will make an effort to free themselves from their compulsions and to improve and bless their lives and the lives of their families according to the doctrines, practices, and covenants of God.

Faced with a growing onslaught against marriage and the family, of which homosexual militancy is a part, the present position of church leaders is far from reflecting a “descent into homophobia.” This is a “big lie.” This position reflects a determination to stay the course and adhere to the scriptures and com-

mandments as they have been understood and taught under the authority of the leaders of the church from the beginning.\footnote{For recent statements from the church, see the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, \textit{The Family: A Proclamation to the World} (Salt Lake City, 1995); Dallin H. Oaks, “Same Gender Attraction,” \textit{Ensign} (October 1995): 7–14.}

**Conclusion**

Quinn’s agenda-driven history is written from a homosexual point of view. It reflects a sexual preoccupation contrary to his Latter-day Saint background and represents a complete break with his Mormon past. Quinn’s book is an attempt to rewrite Latter-day Saint history in his own image accompanying his movement from authentic, traditional Latter-day Saint values to homosexual activism. While published by a university press, Quinn’s book is in fact an anti-Mormon book, displaying much of the spirit and purpose of the dishonest and lurid “exposés” of the past. It is a form of persecution and a gross imposition on the Latter-day Saints. His book is neither successful Mormon history nor homosexual/lesbian history nor even social history. Much of it is pure fabrication.

When \textit{Dialogue} published Quinn’s first article justifying homosexual conduct, we and others contacted the University of Illinois Press, pointing out in detail many of the problems we found in his initial essay. We urged the publisher of \textit{Same-Sex Dynamics} to check carefully all of Quinn’s endnotes and to question some of his interpretations prior to publishing his book. These recommendations were rejected. Richard Wentworth, director of the University of Illinois Press, insisted that

The point of the book, as I understand it, is that same-sex relationships, whether or not they may have involved homosexuality, were not frowned upon in the nineteenth century as they tend to be at the present time. . . . It needs to be remembered that homosexuality is not a sin or a crime. . . . It is unfortunate that many of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints [sic] consider homosexuality a shameful thing. I believe that
this is something Professor Quinn, himself a homosexual, is attempting to dispute.337

In this response to us, Wentworth explained his editorial viewpoint and also set forth his reading of Quinn’s motives, biases, and political agenda, none of which are explained in the book, nor in the publicity about the book put out by the University of Illinois Press. Wentworth may not have been aware of Quinn’s secretive-ness about his homosexual passion and hence may not have known that Quinn had not previously publicly acknowledged his homosexual interests. Wentworth’s letter indicated that a copy went to Quinn. This may have led Quinn finally to explain himself by revealing to homosexual activist Michelangelo Signorile that he is “gay.” Quinn told Signorile that he was once married and had four children, and hence he feels that he is “part of a complicated interaction.”338 Thus in August 1996 he finally put an end to speculation by confirming rumors that had circulated for many years, announcing publicly that he does not “define [himself] as ‘bisexual’” because he does not “have an equal attraction to both genders.” Instead, Quinn said in an interview with Signorile, which appeared in a New York City homosexual magazine called Out, that he is “overwhelmingly attracted to men.”339 Quinn later acknowledged to the media in Utah that, though he had been married eighteen years, he had known he was “gay” since the age of twelve.340 This may help us to understand some of his recent revisionist Mormon history, and his reasons for writing Same-Sex Dynamics.

Quinn’s book gives a deeply misleading impression of Latter-day Saint history. It is tendentious and inaccurate and misrepresents the lives and teachings of prominent Latter-day Saints, trying to make them appear soft on what they understand to be homo-

337 Letter from Richard L. Wentworth, Director and Editor-in-Chief, University of Illinois Press, to George L. Mitton, 31 May 1996.
339 Ibid.
sexual sin. Quinn employs confused language, takes material out of context and uses suggestion, insinuation, and innuendo to create false ideas about Latter-day Saints, all in an attempt to make the current leadership of the church appear out of harmony with past leaders. The book would corrupt the understanding of LDS history in a way persons in the past would never have intended or envisaged. In our view, Quinn’s work in *Same-Sex Dynamics* amounts to an utter misuse of the academic training he has received. Surely the methodology revealed here points to the need for great caution in approaching his other works, demanding careful scrutiny of his notes and conclusions.

Furthermore, Quinn’s book is a great disservice to those seeking to reform their lives, engendering confusion about the church’s moral teachings and providing no incentive to change. The book in no way helps the transgressor to find the strength to overcome sexual sin or to avoid temptation. We also see it as a contribution to the corruption of moral thought, seeking to make what was once shocking and repellent become commonplace in our thinking and conversation.